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World India debates workers' right to disconnect A9 • Top of the News Chinatown lights up for CNY A4

Budget 2019 to focus on education, healthcare, security

Heng says one priority will be to help S'poreans grapple with the big changes in global economy

Amelia Teng

Singapore's needs in education, healthcare, security and defence are growing, and the upcoming Budget will focus on these areas, said Finance Minister Heng Swee Keat.

Mr Heng, who will deliver the Budget statement on Feb 18, said another priority will be to help Singaporeans grapple with significant changes taking place in the global economy and make use of opportunities, especially with technology.

Speaking on the sidelines of a community event in Tampines yesterday, he said: "We've done well in providing healthcare and education. We'll continue to do that - the needs in those areas are growing. At the same time, the needs for better security, and better ability to defend ourselves, are also growing."

The Budget will focus on these key areas as well as in transforming Singapore's economy, he said.

While Budget 2019 is Mr Heng's fourth as Finance Minister, it will be his first since he was named first assistant secretary-general of the ruling People's Action Party, setting the stage for his anticipated succession

as Singapore's next prime minister.

Yesterday, Mr Heng gave a quick overview of some key challenges that Singapore faces.

The Budget's "one simple aim" is to improve the lives of Singaporeans, and "the needs are very large, whether it is building big-scale infrastructure projects, like our MRT lines or the airport, or especially our HDB flats, or whether it's taking care of our seniors, and in fact all Singaporeans".

He also highlighted the importance of keeping the economy vibrant amid global uncertainties and rapid technological changes.

"We must take this opportunity to ride this wave of change and enable Singaporeans of all ages to do well in the coming years," he said.

Mr Heng added that Singapore has to be "very watchful about global developments", when asked how the recent rejection of the Brexit deal could affect Singapore.

Last Tuesday, British MPs threw out Prime Minister Theresa May's deal for Britain's departure from the European Union, which is scheduled to take place on March 29.

Mr Heng cited developments such as the new risks building up in

the global economy, be it Brexit or the protectionist movement growing around the world.

He said: "People's support for globalisation is weakening because there is a sense that globalisation has left some people behind. And unfortunately, some of the developments are negative, even for their own country. Even for people who advocated a particular course of action, they're now regretting it."

Said Mr Heng: "It just shows that when we make economic policies, we have to be very, very thoughtful of the long-term implications, and that we cannot avoid doing the difficult things."

Singapore is on the right track by starting the process of restructuring its economy, he added.

"It's not easy. A lot of hard work goes into companies transforming themselves, a lot of hard work by workers to learn new skills. But it is the right thing to do and I hope that we can sustain the momentum."

He noted that corporate leaders are key players in the economy's transformation, and Singapore must stay focused in its efforts to restructure and upgrade skills and find meaningful partnerships around the world to stay competitive.

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[SEE TOP OF THE NEWS A6](#)

Actor injured during military drill overseas

Home-grown actor Aloysius Pang (right) was seriously injured during an overseas military exercise in New Zealand last Saturday.

The Ministry of Defence confirmed yesterday that Corporal First Class (NS) Pang Wei Chong,

28, was hurt while repairing a Singapore Self-Propelled Howitzer around 2.05pm Singapore time.

CFC Pang, an armament technician from the Singapore Armed Forces' 268th Battalion Singapore Artillery, had been taking part in



Exercise Thunder Warrior at the Waiouru training area in New Zealand.

[SEE TOP OF THE NEWS A7](#)

Thai golfer's biggest triumph



Thai golfer Jazz Janewattananond won the SMBC Singapore Open yesterday in the biggest triumph of his career. The 23-year-old fired a six-under 65 in the final round at Sentosa Golf Club's Serapong Course for an 18-under 266 total, two shots ahead of England's Paul Casey and Japan's Yoshinori Fujimoto. ST PHOTO: LIM YAOHUI [SEE SPORT C12](#)

Arctic happenings of interest to us: Sam Tan



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It's as far removed from steamy Singapore as you can get, but developments in the Arctic have significance here, says Minister of State Sam Tan.

Mr Tan, who is in Norway for a global conference on the region, pointed to just two of the most obvious "connection" points: climate

change and a possible new Northern Sea passage. As a small nation at the crossroads of a major global shipping lane, the possibility of the Northern Sea Route is of interest to Singapore, he said.

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10 must-reads for today

1 Blue skies in Beijing but...
Blue skies in Beijing have become an increasingly common sight, but a new study by American and Chinese researchers has shown that China's progress in cleaning up its air might not be all it is made out to be, throwing up lessons for other cities battling smog. **WORLD A10**



Air quality was excellent in Beijing yesterday and residents were out and about in the city's central business district. ST PHOTO: DANSON CHEONG

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VIDEO

Tech maverick returns

Creative Technology's Mr Sim Wong Hoo, the former poster boy of Singapore's tech scene, talks about marriage, running and his Super X-Fi, a revolutionary audio technology that has won rave reviews, in Lunch with Sumiko. <http://str.sg/SimWongHoo>



VIDEO

Clean and green

Do natural cleaners work? We put soap nuts, tea seed powder and vodka to the test. <http://str.sg/natural-cleaners>

2 Focus of Budget

The upcoming Budget to be delivered on Feb 18 will focus on education, healthcare, security and defence, as Singapore's needs in these areas are growing. Finance Minister Heng Swee Keat said the Budget will also focus on transforming Singapore's economy. **TOP OF THE NEWS A1**

3 Headway in S'pore-KL talks

Defence Minister Ng Eng Hen said Singapore and Malaysia are "making headway" and communicating over the ongoing maritime and airspace disputes. He said it is now up to diplomats to arrive at a "constructive position" and that Singapore's security agencies are "ever vigilant". **TOP OF THE NEWS A4**

4 Behind cleric's release

Two academics tell The Straits Times that the move by Indonesian President Joko Widodo to release radical cleric Abu Bakar Bashir on parole is a political call as he woos Islamist votes in April's presidential polls. They warned that this will have repercussions. **WORLD A11**

5 May's risky game of chicken

As the March 29 deadline looms, British Prime Minister Theresa May is still betting the European Union will budge or British MPs will accept a repackaged version of her rejected Brexit plans, says global affairs correspondent Jonathan Eyal (below). **OPINION A15**



6 Guards for private events

Singaporeans are engaging professional security guards for small, low-key functions such as private parties, weddings and funeral wakes. The reasons for hiring a guard, who is paid between \$200 and \$500 an hour, range from ensuring safety to keeping out gatecrashers. **HOME B2**

7 Aceing IB exams

Singapore has consistently outperformed its global counterparts in the International Baccalaureate (IB) programme. Since Singapore started taking part in the two-year pre-university diploma programme in 2005, many of its IB students have emerged tops, often making up more than half of the top scorers worldwide at the examination's November sitting. **HOME B3**

8 Growing the start-up spirit

With more young people keen on entrepreneurship, some are taking the plunge to start their own businesses as soon as they leave school. Universities have responded to the trend by introducing more courses for budding entrepreneurs. **BUSINESS C1**

9 Ikhsan's goal

Ikhsan Fandi is so determined to make a name for himself at Norwegian club Raufoss IL that he will not pick the jersey number 17, which is synonymous with his father Fandi Ahmad. Instead, he said: "My aim is No. 9. It is currently worn by my teammate Anton (Henningsson) but I want to work towards that role as the leading striker." **SPORT C10**

10 New portal to book gigs

One of Australia's largest live entertainment companies, TEG, is launching a new ticketing portal today that is set to rival those of other major ticketing firms. **LIFE D7**

What it should have been

In Saturday's report, "Tan Cheng Bock, ex-PAP cadres set up new political party", we reported that Mr Inderjit Singh said it is good if Dr Tan can attract some former MPs, should he contest in a GRC. Mr Singh has clarified that he had said Dr Tan would need to attract some former MPs to boost his team's credibility.

SEE **TOP OF THE NEWS A6**

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Angeline See
Human resource executive

Date: Feb 19 or 25
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S'pore, KL making headway on disputes: Ng Eng Hen

Minister says leaders from both sides are communicating, even as Republic's security agencies remain ever vigilant

Singapore and Malaysia are "making headway" and communicating over the ongoing maritime and airspace disputes.

At the same time, Singapore's security agencies are "ever vigilant", said Defence Minister Ng Eng Hen.

Dr Ng told Channel NewsAsia on the sidelines of an active living event yesterday: "I think we are making headway. As you know, the Minister for Transport and the Minister for Foreign Affairs and the (Malaysian) officials are speaking.

"At the same time, our security agencies (the Singapore Armed Forces and the Home Team) are ever vigilant. We watch very carefully. We know what's going on. We're able to respond very quickly."

Dr Ng said that it is now up to diplomats to arrive at a "constructive position", adding: "We'll leave it to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, but I think both sides have stated their views so let's let our diplomats and officials talk it through and arrive at a constructive position that respects both sides' rights, goes (in accordance) with in-

ternational law as well as helps both sides prosper."

He noted: "Ultimately, we lead our individual countries but we are servants to our people, and we must make sure our people are not put into harm's way and that their livelihoods are not affected.

"At the same time, guarding our own rights (based) upon international law and I think based on that, there are common views that both sides can arrive at that will meet our objectives. That's the best way to serve our people."

Dr Ng said the most important takeaway is that "we have avoided coming to blows".

He added: "It's always better to settle disagreements through peaceful talks, negotiations and discussions."

Singapore disputes Malaysia's claim that the new Instrument Landing System (ILS) and ILS approach procedures for Singapore's Seletar Airport will affect the development of Pasir Gudang town in Johor.

The two countries are also entangled in a maritime dispute follow-

READY TO RESPOND

I think we are making headway. As you know, the Minister for Transport and the Minister for Foreign Affairs and the (Malaysian) officials are speaking. At the same time, our security agencies (the Singapore Armed Forces and the Home Team) are ever vigilant. We watch very carefully. We know what's going on. We're able to respond very quickly.



DEFENCE MINISTER NG ENG HEN

ing Malaysia's decision to expand Johor Baru's port limits. The issue was escalated when Malaysian government vessels moved into Singapore waters.

Officials from the two countries will meet in the coming weeks to discuss the ongoing disputes.

Johor MB says he does not need KL ministry's nod to visit vessel off Tuas

KOTA TINGGI • Johor Menteri Besar Osman Sopian said he does not need the "blessing" of Malaysia's Foreign Ministry to carry out his duties as the state's chief minister, as he defended himself for making a visit on Jan 9 to waters off Tuas.

Malaysia's Foreign Ministry in a statement on Friday denied that Foreign Minister Saifuddin Abdullah had given Datuk Osman his "unofficial blessing" to board MV Pedoman, a Malaysian Marine Department vessel anchored off Tuas, in what Malaysia claims is its territory under Johor Baru port.

Singapore, on the other hand, has asserted that the area is part of its territorial waters.

Mr Osman said yesterday: "I have said it earlier, and I will say it again. My visit to MV Pedoman was because the crewmen had been there for more than a month.

"I was acting in my capacity as the state leader and the visit was within Johor waters even though the Foreign Ministry claimed that it did not have their blessing.

"Let's say, if I wanted to make a visit within the Johor district, do I need permission from the Home Ministry?"

On Thursday, Mr Osman claimed that he had the "unofficial blessing" of Datuk Saifuddin

to board the vessel.

But Malaysia's Foreign Ministry denied approving his trip, saying on Friday that "upon learning of the planned visit from a Malaysian enforcement agency on the morning of Jan 9 itself", it "immediately and repeatedly contacted the chief minister's office and conveyed a message not to proceed with the visit".

Mr Osman's action resulted in the postponement of the Jan 14 meeting of the Joint Ministerial Committee for Iskandar Malaysia, as Singapore said that the intrusion made holding the bilateral talks "untenable".

The Menteri Besar also sits on the panel.

Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad also confirmed on Friday that "the Menteri Besar went without our permission", adding that "he thought it was Johor waters, that's why he went there".

Tun Dr Mahathir described Singapore's reaction as quite severe, "as if you are going to war".

The Malaysian Foreign Ministry said the two countries will discuss bilateral maritime issues on Jan 28.

Officials will discuss airspace concerns in the "coming weeks", including the Instrument Landing System and approach procedures for Seletar Airport.

High-tech draw at traditional CNY street bazaar

Benson Ang
Lifestyle Correspondent

A traditional street bazaar is going high-tech.

Shoppers at this year's Chinese New Year market in Chinatown will find two unusual booths nestled among the ones selling pomelos, decorations, flowers and snacks.

They are by two local online platforms: Shopee, which allows users to buy products using its mobile app and have them delivered; and Native, where users book tours and buy tickets to attractions around the world, including Singapore, through its app and website.

This is the first time they are taking part in the bazaar, and their partnership with the event is in line with Singapore's move towards a Smart Nation.

"Every year, the organising committee strives to elevate the Chinatown CNY Celebrations with various new partnerships and initiatives," said Mr Philemon Loh, head of publicity and marketing in this year's event organising committee.

He added that this year's partnership with Shopee and Native is "to better attract visitors across the board", including the youth, elderly and local and foreign visitors.

The event's official opening ceremony and street light-up took place



Visitors taking part in a lucky draw at the Shopee booth at the Chinese New Year festive street bazaar in Chinatown yesterday. They can learn first-hand how to shop on the app as well as purchase New Year goodies via the app. ST PHOTO: MARK CHEONG

yesterday, and Minister for Trade and Industry Chan Chun Sing was the guest of honour.

Also at the event were Dr Lily Neo, an MP for Jalan Besar GRC, and Mr Vincent Tan, chairman of the event's organising committee.

This year's celebrations feature a display of 2,688 beautifully handcrafted lanterns, with 180 expertly sculptured pig lanterns dotting the main streets of Chinatown.

Dr Neo said: "We hope this year's line-up of events will attract an even larger crowd to Chinatown and help promote the spirit of happiness and harmony in our rich tradition."

At the Shopee booth along Smith Street, visitors can learn first-hand how to shop on the app. Chinese New Year goodies will also be available for purchase on the app.

Native's booth at Kreta Ayer Square will allow tourists to get in-

stant information about local tour options and book day tours to places such as Little India and around Chinatown.

Shopee's chief commercial officer Zhou Junjie said: "Chinese New Year shopping is traditionally an offline experience. By injecting a fresh digital element into the traditionally cash-and-carry environment of a street bazaar, we hope to introduce technology to digitalise and ele-

vate the classic bazaar experience."

Mr Bryan Goh, 28, co-founder of Native, said its app has already seen hundreds of downloads. "We're getting huge exposure. I believe that in the coming days, there will be an up-take in bookings through our app."

At one of the booths selling New Year goodies at the bazaar is Mr Simon Tan, in his 30s, who sells Chinese New Year decorations.

He said: "Business was quite good

on Saturday, as the weather was good. But it was very bad on Friday, when it rained for quite some time.

"Our newer items are these pin-wheel decorations imported from Hong Kong. They are said to bring good luck to the owner."

The festive street bazaar will be on until Feb 4, while the street light-up will last until March 6.

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Drumming up Thaipusam fervour with live music

Benson Ang

With a barrel-shaped thavil drum strapped around his shoulder, Mr Jathishweran Naidu is all geared up for Thaipusam.

The 24-year-old Singaporean will play the traditional Indian instrument for eight to 10 hours during the annual procession from 3am today with his group, Hanusakthi Hanuman Dass, which plays religious songs called bhajans.

They will play indoors first, before moving outdoors at 7am as per the rules.

Each group, consisting of singers, a main percussion instrument player, and players of hand instruments such as tambourines, will accompany kavadi-carrying devotees.

This is the first year that percus-

sion instruments – including traditional Indian drums such as the thavil, dhol and khol – are allowed to be played at the procession since 1973, when the playing of all music was banned after fights between competing groups.

The Hindu festival of Thaipusam is held in honour of Lord Subramaniam, also known as Lord Murugan, said to be the destroyer of evil.

Mr Jathishweran, a financial consultant, said he looks forward to accompanying the kavadi bearers, who have to carry the steel and wood structures of at least 20kg for hours. "So I want to play music to help them forget the weight and pain of carrying this structure. The beat and rhythm are a form of motivation and distraction to them."

Hearing music live is different

from listening to it from speakers, he added. "When we play live, we can react to the singers and other musicians. We can slow down, speed up – it is more organic and authentic. I might also play for other groups who don't have a percussion player. As participants, we try to help one another, and create a sense of community."

Some 20,000 people are expected at this year's Thaipusam procession, held from yesterday to today.

Following feedback from the Hindu community, the authorities have been relaxing rules surrounding the event since a move in 2012 to allow music to be transmitted over broadcast systems at designated points along the procession's route.

Mr T. Raja Segar, chief executive of the Hindu Endowments Board, said there are 35 static music points



Mr Jathishweran Naidu dressed in traditional Indian garments and carrying his thavil. The 24-year-old will play the instrument for eight to 10 hours during the Thaipusam procession from 3am today with his group, Hanusakthi Hanuman Dass. ST PHOTO: BENSON ANG

this year, up from 21 last year.

Since 2015, devotees have been singing religious hymns with small hand-held instruments, he said.

"The request to carry musical instruments has been heard and this year, bhajan groups and singers following kavadis have been allowed

to play a percussion instrument. Thaipusam is now a festival with more music."

But he added: "We appeal to devotees to be responsible with the new provision of musical instruments.

"Abuse of the rules for playing musical instruments will jeopardise fu-

ture negotiations and the status of the music provisions in the Thaipusams to come. We sincerely urge all to cooperate and ensure that this year's Thaipusam is the best that we have had."

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Arctic events will have big impact on Singapore: Sam Tan



A polar bear in the Svalbard Islands in Norway. Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Sam Tan said melting polar ice caps "pose a threat not just to the surrounding region, but to low-lying islands such as Singapore". PHOTO: ISTOCKPHOTO

Republic interested in possibilities presented by opening of Northern Sea Route, he says

Audrey Tan
Environment Correspondent
In Tromso (Norway)

Whatever happens in the Arctic – whether melting ice or the possibility of a new trade route – will have a significant impact on Singapore despite how far away it is, said the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs.

Mr Sam Tan told The Straits Times in an e-mail interview ahead of yesterday's opening of a confer-

ence on Arctic issues in Tromso, Norway: "Melting polar ice caps pose a threat not just to the surrounding region, but to low-lying islands such as Singapore."

And as a small maritime nation at the crossroads of one of the most important shipping lanes in the world, Singapore is interested in the possibilities that the opening of the Northern Sea Route presents for international shipping, said Mr Tan.

The route is a new passageway

for ships in the Arctic region, which is now open for a few months during the northern hemisphere summer. If opened all year round, this passage, which shaves 30 per cent off travel time via the conventional Suez Canal-Malacca Strait option, would have global shipping implications.

But Ms Hema Nadarajah, a Singaporean doctoral candidate studying international relations at the University of British Columbia's department of political science, said the changes bring more opportunities than disruption to the maritime industry in Singapore.

"Keppel Corporation, for example, built its first two icebreakers

in 2008 for Russian oil company Lukoil-Kaliningradmorneft," she noted.

"The sea-ice melt, increase in shipping and energy demands in the region offer Singapore opportunities, particularly given its expertise in infrastructure development."

Singapore's interests will be represented at the conference this week, with both Mr Tan and Mr Aziz Merchant, executive director of the marine and deepwater technology division of Keppel Offshore and Marine, speaking at the event. This year's Arctic Frontiers conference, now in its 13th edition, is themed "Smart Arctic".

The conference director, Mr Ole

Ovretveit, said technology could help Arctic nations strike a balance between development and protecting the environment – a dichotomy he foresees getting more pronounced over the next decade in the face of climate change, industrial development and continued exploration for oil and gas.

He cited the "polar paradox", a term used by analysts to describe how global warming and melting ice could boost economic activity such as fossil fuel resource exploration in the Arctic, although these could in turn exacerbate the warming effect.

But it was important to recognise that the Arctic is home to up to six

million people, whose economies could be improved with development, Mr Ovretveit added.

"Many people have this perception of the Arctic as being an ice museum, and this strong, powerful image could put a stop to developing the Arctic.

"But I think that the Arctic will do fine if we develop in consideration of environmental concerns," noted Mr Ovretveit, pointing to how technological solutions and new innovations – a focus at this year's event – could be key to achieving this.

Mr Tan, who is accompanied by Ministry of Foreign Affairs officials, said several of Singapore's shipping companies have already demonstrated Arctic capabilities and industry credentials.

"Keppel was the very first Asian shipyard to build icebreakers and is currently working with a United States developer on the very first 'green rig' to be used in the Arctic," noted Mr Tan.

Mr Ovretveit added that the participation of non-Arctic countries such as Singapore in the conference was important in providing different perspectives on the various issues.

"By asking the right questions, they can contextualise the Arctic for the rest of the world, so the region will be less considered as being just on the periphery at the top of the world," he noted.

Since Singapore was granted observer status at the Arctic Council in 2013, it has played an active role, attending Arctic meetings, hosting workshops and sharing its experiences in tackling issues such as marine litter and oil spills.

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Tan Cheng Bock's new political party

Singaporeans must decide who can better serve them, says Heng

Amelia Teng

Finance Minister Heng Swee Keat said Singaporeans will need to decide who can better serve them, in response to former People's Action Party MP Tan Cheng Bock's return to politics.

Dr Tan's move to form a political party is "a development that is not totally unexpected", Mr Heng said yesterday on the sidelines of a community event in Tampines.

"Singaporeans will have to decide on who can serve them better, and I will leave Singaporeans to make that judgment," he said.

Mr Heng, the first assistant secretary-general of the ruling PAP, is the first PAP leader to weigh in on news of Dr Tan setting up a political party.

Last Friday, Dr Tan, 78, announced that he had applied on Wednesday to register the Pro-



PHOTO: DR TAN CHENG BOCK/FACEBOOK

gress Singapore Party, which includes 11 other "like-minded Singaporeans", some of whom are

former PAP cadres.

The six-term MP, who retired from politics in 2006, lost narrowly

WALKABOUT ENCOUNTER

I told Dr Tan to come more often. I tell this to a lot (of) people – good for business in Chong Pang.



LAW AND HOME AFFAIRS MINISTER K. SHANMUGAM, who bumped into Dr Tan Cheng Bock at Chong Pang hawker centre.

The next general election must be held by April 2021.

In a Facebook post yesterday, Law and Home Affairs Minister K. Shanmugam said he bumped into Dr Tan Cheng Bock on Saturday during his usual morning walkabout at Chong Pang hawker centre and the nearby coffee shops.

"I told Dr Tan to come more often. I tell this to a lot (of) people – good for business in Chong Pang," he said, adding that he also took a photograph with Dr Tan.

Dr Tan also posted on Facebook photographs from his breakfast in Chong Pang. In one of them, he was seen with former National Solidarity Party acting secretary-general Hazel Poa, who contested in the 2011 General Election.

Ms Poa could not be contacted for comment.

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1,000 lend a hand with spring cleaning in Tampines

A thousand volunteers spent yesterday spring cleaning – not their own homes, but 95 homes of residents in Tampines.

Ahead of Chinese New Year, the volunteers rolled up their sleeves and from 10am to 6pm helped to clean, paint walls, remove junk, or replace furniture for the residents, many of whom are seniors living alone or come from low-income households.

It was part of an initiative called Project Refresh, which aims to encourage people of all ages to volunteer. The initiative was started by Young NTUC, the youth wing of the National Trades Union Congress, in 2016.

Since then, it has been held about four times a year, before major festivals such as Chinese New Year, Hari Raya Aidilfitri, Deepavali and Christmas.

Yesterday's event – a joint effort by Young NTUC and North East Community Development Council – had the highest number of volunteers since the programme started. Taking part were students and teachers, employees from corporate organisations, grassroots volunteers, as well as Tampines residents.

Project Refresh has previously been held in North East District in areas such as Punggol and Hougang.



Volunteers at work in the home of a Tampines resident yesterday. It was part of an initiative called Project Refresh, which aims to encourage people of all ages to volunteer. ST PHOTO: KELVIN CHNG

Tampines resident Wong Cher Khoo, 65, who lives with his wife, said he appreciated the effort by the volunteers to give the walls in his two-room flat a fresh coat of paint.

"I'm surprised and touched by the

gesture, and it reminds me of the kampung days when we helped one another," he said.

The couple have five adult children.

Mr Wong, who suffered a stroke five years ago and uses a wheel-

chair, added: "Some of our neighbours are old and living alone, so cleaning their homes is a great help for them."

One of the volunteers, secondary school teacher Suhaimi Zainal Shah, 29, who helped to coordinate

the event, said: "We decided to organise it near the festive period... and we hope it brings the residents joy, especially if they're lonely."

Finance Minister Heng Swee Keat, who is an MP for Tampines GRC and was guest of honour at the

event, said these initiatives help Singaporeans understand the needs of the community better, in the process of developing a more caring and inclusive society.

Amelia Teng

Actor Aloysius Pang seriously hurt during SAF exercise in NZ

Accident happened while repairing howitzer; he is in high-dependency unit after surgery

Teet Zhuo and Yip Wai Yee

Home-grown actor Aloysius Pang was seriously injured during an overseas military exercise in New Zealand on Saturday.

In a statement yesterday, the Ministry of Defence confirmed that Corporal First Class (NS) Pang Wei Chong, 28, was hurt while repairing a Singapore Self-Propelled Howitzer around 2.05pm Singapore time. "An investigation is ongoing to determine the cause of the incident," Mindef added.

Talent agency NoonTalk Media confirmed that its artist had met with an accident while on reservist duty in New Zealand.

CFC Pang, an armament technician from the Singapore Armed Forces' (SAF) 268th Battalion Singapore Artillery, had been taking part in Exercise Thunder Warrior at the Waiouru training area in New Zealand, Mindef said.

He was transferred to the battalion casualty station at 2.25pm, where he was stabilised by a medical officer before being evacuated to Waiouru Camp Medical Centre for further treatment.

A helicopter arrived at 4.10pm and CFC Pang was evacuated, while conscious, to Waikato hospital in Hamilton, south of Auckland.

He reached the hospital at 6pm and underwent surgery, which was completed at 11.40pm. He is now being monitored in the high-dependency unit, Mindef said.

"The Ministry of Defence and the SAF are assisting CFC (NS) Pang's family during this period," it added.

Exercise Thunder Warrior is an annual artillery live-firing exercise that has been conducted by Singapore and New Zealand since 1997.

This year's exercise, which began on Jan 5 involving over 500 personnel, ends on Feb 2.

NoonTalk Media said in a Facebook post yesterday: "Aloysius' mum is currently travelling to New Zealand, and NoonTalk Media is also in close communication with Mindef."

His older brother Wei Zhe told the media yesterday afternoon that the actor was in stable condition and had spoken with their mother by phone in the morning.

He added that he and his father would be flying to New Zealand to see his younger sibling today.

The actor had posted on Facebook on Jan 5 about his upcoming reservist duties: "Off to serve our country. Back at the end of the month! May not be able to post much when I'm there," adding "wait for my return" in Chinese.

Following the news of his injury, his fans, friends and manager Desmond Koh all took to social media to voice their concern.

Mr Koh, 46, a television host who is also the head of NoonTalk Media, wrote on Instagram in Chinese yesterday morning: "To be honest, I'm feeling at a loss, and also a lot of heartache. Everything will be all right... I am unable to respond to everyone's text messages and telephone calls, please forgive me."

The post was followed by messages of encouragement from other local celebrities such as Mr Romeo Tan and Mr Shaun Chen, who said that Mr Pang "will be fine".

Mr Pang's close friend and former actor colleague Xu Bin, 29, also wrote on Instagram in Chinese: "I received bad news early in the morning. I hope you'll be fine, and that you will return (home) safely."

Exercise Thunder Warrior is an annual artillery live-firing exercise that has been conducted by Singapore and New Zealand since 1997. This year's exercise, which began on Jan 5 involving over 500 personnel, ends on Feb 2.

the 2016 Star Awards, and clinched the Best Newcomer Award at the 2015 Star Awards.

A child star who started acting at age nine, he was one of eight young male stars picked by Mediacorp to form a new generation of celebrities dubbed the Eight Dukes.

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Actor Aloysius Pang met with an accident on Saturday during reservist duty, while taking part in Exercise Thunder Warrior at the Waiouru training area in New Zealand. The 28-year-old is in stable condition, according to his older brother. PHOTO: ALOYSIUS PANG/FACEBOOK

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Stage set for another powwow in Davos

Forum's relevance remains despite absence of leaders like Trump and Xi, says its founder

Sumiko Tan
Executive Editor

American President Donald Trump will not be there and neither will Chinese leader Xi Jinping, British Prime Minister Theresa May and French President Emmanuel Macron.

But there will be other world leaders trekking up the Swiss mountains to the town of Davos for this year's World Economic Forum (WEF), which starts tomorrow and runs till Friday.

German Chancellor Angela

Merkel, Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and Brazil's newly elected President Jair Bolsonaro have booked their flights, as has Chinese Vice-President Wang Qishan.

The White House had cancelled its delegation's trip to the event last week, after Mr Trump earlier said he would not attend because of the continuing crisis over the government shutdown.

In an interview with Geneva-based newspaper Le Temps, WEF founder Klaus Schwab said the meeting remains relevant even though Mr Trump and other major leaders will not be in attendance.

Although the planned meeting between the American and Chinese delegations was supposed to be one of the highlights of this year's event, there will still be about 800 participants from the United States, including heads of the biggest companies, he said. There will also be about 60 heads of state, Mr Schwab told Le Temps in the interview published on Saturday.

The forum was founded by Mr Schwab, a German engineer and economist, in 1971 and aims to improve the state of the world by bringing together business, political, academic and other leaders to shape global, regional and industry agendas.

The January event has also provided a stage for leaders to present their case to the world, like during

the 2017 meeting when Mr Xi gave a robust defence of globalisation and free trade, ahead of the inauguration of Mr Trump.

"No one will emerge as a winner from a trade war," the Chinese leader said then. Two years on, the trade war between the US and China does not look like being resolved any time soon.

The theme for this year's Davos meeting is Globalisation 4.0: Shaping A New Architecture In The Age Of The Fourth Industrial Revolution.

Explaining the focus, the forum's programme guide says that the world is at a crossroads.

"We can continue the present trajectory of polarising views, increased conflicts and numerous unresolved problems. At best, this

path will result in permanent global crisis management. At worst, it will deteriorate into chaos with innumerable unintended consequences."

Another option is to shape a global architecture to "build the future in a constructive, collaborative way".

Delegates will have more than 300 sessions to choose from. The programme this year emphasises perennial topics like climate change as well as more recent ones like mental health and the rise of populism.

Alongside the event, Nanyang Technological University and the National University of Singapore will host a panel discussion on Wednesday on how Singapore is addressing the challenges of Industry 4.0 and promoting a new Globalisation 4.0.

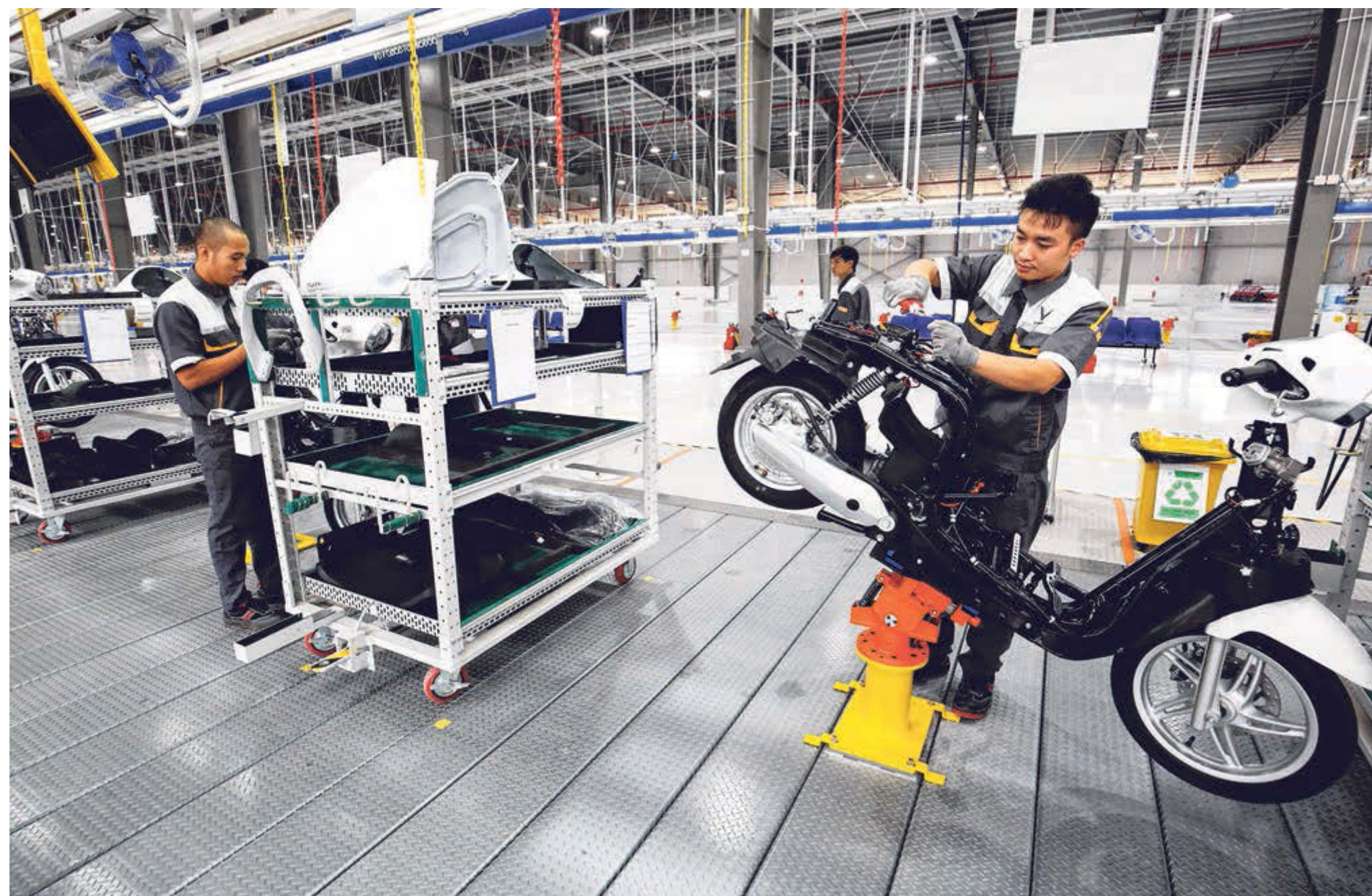
Mingling with world leaders and company chief executives will be British naturalist and broadcaster David Attenborough, who will be honoured for his contributions.

American magician David Blaine will be among the celebrities who will make an appearance.

In a session titled Searching For Magic In Real Life, he will talk about how "awe can shift perception and turn sceptics into believers".

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Alongside the event, Nanyang Technological University and the National University of Singapore will host a panel discussion on Wednesday on how Singapore is addressing the challenges of Industry 4.0 and promoting a new Globalisation 4.0.



An e-scooter assembly line in a factory in Hai Phong. With Vietnam having a raft of free trade agreements, relatively cheap labour and close proximity to China, Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc has a good story to tell the global executives he will meet at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, this week. PHOTO: REUTERS

Vietnam makes safe-haven pitch amid US-China trade conflict

HANOI • A red-hot economy, business-friendly policies and a Communist Party led by free-traders – this is the elevator pitch Vietnamese Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc is delivering to global investors amid the trade war between the United States and China.

"We are ready to grab the opportunity," Mr Phuc said in an interview with Bloomberg TV, a few days before departing this week for the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland.

Vietnam is quietly positioning itself as a safe haven for manufacturers wary of getting caught in the

crossfire of the tariff war between the US and China.

With Vietnam having a raft of free trade agreements, relatively cheap labour and close proximity to China, Mr Phuc has a good story to tell the global executives he will meet in Davos.

"We are trying to increase exports, in both quantity and quality... especially in those which we have advantages, such as seafood, commodities, footwear and electronics," he said. "We aim to become an export economy that can grow fast and provide more jobs with higher income for our people."

Nonetheless, the South-east Asian nation is yet to see a flood of companies moving in from China, he said.

Its economy also has some serious challenges to overcome – inadequate infrastructure and a lack of skilled workers make it difficult to attract manufacturing beyond assembly-line work such as garment stitching.

The US-China trade war and more subdued world growth is weighing on export demand, a threat to an economy such as Vietnam where trade accounts for about twice the nation's gross domestic product. About a quarter of Vietnam's total trade is with China.

Vietnam's economy seems to be sheltered for now. Growth quickened to 7.1 per cent last year, among the fastest in the world.

Mr Phuc said he is confident that growth will reach the higher end of the government's forecast range of 6.6 per cent to 6.8 per cent this

year. He also vowed to keep the Vietnamese dong stable this year.

Vietnam, which has completed about 16 free trade agreements, began tethering itself to global trade after introducing market-oriented "doi moi" reforms in the 1980s.

Exports surged to a record US\$244 billion (S\$331 billion) last year, with US customers accounting for about US\$48 billion of that – more than double compared with five years ago.

Vietnam has also cropped up in the swirl of rumours and conjecture as a possible site for the much-anticipated second summit between US President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un.

While no decision has been made on the location, a Vietnamese government source said "logistical preparations" for hosting a summit were under way, most likely in the capital Hanoi or coastal city of Danang.

BLOOMBERG, AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Hundreds of hotel rooms vacant after pullout by US delegation

GENEVA • US President Donald Trump's decision to cancel the US delegation's participation in Davos created a rare commodity days before the start of the World Economic Forum – vacant hotel rooms.

Mr Trump cancelled the planned trip of Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin and the rest of the US delegation to the Swiss mountain resort to deal with the US government shutdown, meaning hundreds of hotel rooms are suddenly free, Swiss newspaper Tages-Anzeiger reported.

US bookings at the event included US\$231,855 (S\$314,970) worth of rooms at the 3-star Madrisa Lodge in Klosters-Serneus and a booking worth US\$103,935 at the 5-star Hotel Quellenhof in Bad Ragaz, the newspaper reported, citing figures from a US government database.

Rooms at the Madrisa Lodge are now available on Booking.com from tomorrow, when the forum starts, from a starting price of 2,305 Swiss francs (S\$3,145) for one person.

Participation at the meeting is capped at 2,500 official guests, but thousands more descend on Europe's highest town in January because of surrounding WEF events.

Meanwhile, the droves of black limousines on the snow-covered streets of Davos are frustrating the locals of the Swiss mountain town.

In a country where the central bank chief and government ministers regularly take public transport, the failure of WEF attendees to do the same is the top complaint of the town's 11,000 residents.

They say traffic gets so snarled it becomes dangerous for children to walk to school.

The frustration also highlights the culture clash between the inhabitants of the mid-market ski resort and the overseas business, political and entertainment glitterati who rub shoulders there for a few days each January.

The four-day annual meeting is vital to local businesses and generates an estimated two million francs in tax revenue for the town. But recent local resistance to increasing funding for security suggests a level of forum fatigue has set in.

"Over the last several years, the amount of private cars and traffic in Davos has increased significantly," said Cornell professor Soumitra Dutta, a regular attendee who takes a WEF-organised bus from Zurich airport. "I am not surprised that local residents are not pleased with the congestion."

While the city bus regularly plies the main street of Promenade (transport is free), a delegate's agenda – packed full with meetings, seminars, lunches and evening parties – can make a car appealing.

"The people of Davos complain, but they also earn a lot," said Mr Joerg Grossmann, who owns a limo service in Zurich that sends about 35 cars to the WEF.

In response to the complaints, this time the authorities have built a temporary train station just below the conference centre. Mayor Tarzsius Caviezel hopes that will get more people onto public transport.

BLOOMBERG

Majority worldwide back immigration, nations joining hands: Survey

PARIS • The global public favours cooperation between nations, thinks immigration is a good thing and believes climate scientists, according to a poll of 10,000 people in every region of the world.

The poll was commissioned by the World Economic Forum (WEF) and will be discussed at panels at this year's meeting in Davos, Switzerland.

People in South-east Asia and Africa were the strongest believers in countries working together, with 88 per cent saying it is extremely or very important.

The least enthusiastic region was Western Europe, where 61 per cent

held that view. Worldwide, the figure was 76 per cent, and in North America, 70 per cent.

A global majority of 57 per cent said immigrants were "mostly good" for their new country, but only 40 per cent of Eastern Europeans thought so. Despite the continuing stand-off in the US over building a wall along the Mexican border, 66 per cent of North Americans had a positive view of migrants.

One theme where there was less optimism was social mobility, with only 20 per cent of Western Europeans and 34 per cent of Americans saying it is common to be born poor and become rich.

Across the world, 54 per cent of those polled have trust in climate scientists. But in North America, only 17 per cent do.

Meanwhile, WEF founder Klaus Schwab said the meeting remains relevant even though some world leaders have announced they would not be attending.

Mr Schwab has said his childhood during World War II inspired him to build an organisation that would make the world a better place. His foundation, which hosts many of the world's most powerful, famous and wealthy people at its annual meeting, has clearly made an impact.

But questions have grown about



WEF founder Klaus Schwab has said he wanted to build an organisation that would make the world a better place.

whether the organisation is meeting its declared goal of "improving the state of the world", with resentment rising against the pro-business Davos agenda, and voters turning instead to populist leaders.

One persistent criticism is that WEF meetings have simply created a safe space for the corporate world

to lobby governments without oversight. Ms Oliver Classen of the Swiss NGO Public Eye, which has spearheaded protests and other campaigns to counter the meeting, said the WEF has always been "fully dependent" on the 1,000 companies that support the foundation.

"Schwab seems to have a firm belief that making people talk to each other is an objective that justifies pretty much everything," Ms Classen said. "What he does not realise is that... when the large majority of those people have commercial interests then it is about dealing and not thinking else."

BLOOMBERG, AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

WORLD



THERESA MAY
BRITISH PM TO SET OUT PLANS TO
BREAK BREXIT DEADLOCK **A14**

India debates work-life balance after new Bill

Right to Disconnect Bill is called impractical, utopian, and has slim chance to become law

Debarshi Dasgupta
India Correspondent
In New Delhi

Policemen in the Indian state of Madhya Pradesh had a pleasant surprise earlier this month – they are finally getting a weekly day off.

The decision to grant them a weekly rest day was an election pledge that the Indian National Congress government in the state implemented after taking office last month. While police personnel were allowed annual leave, the absence of a weekly day off had taken a toll on their work-life balance.

The importance of good work-life balance has gained greater public interest in India in recent weeks with the introduction of a Right to Disconnect Bill last month in Parliament. Introduced by Nationalist Congress Party MP Supriya Sule, it seeks

to empower Indians to disconnect from the office after working hours. It is something that concerns not only those who helm essential services, like policemen and doctors, but also regular office-goers who often find themselves working on weekends and holidays.

A study last year by Swiss investment bank UBS found that an average employee in Mumbai works 3,315 hours a year – the highest in the world. Hanoi took the second spot with 2,691 hours and Mexico City placed third with 2,622 hours in the study of 77 cities. Singapore was not on the list. New Delhi, too, ranked among the top five, indicating the culture of long hours is widely prevalent in India.

The Bill says employees have the right not to answer calls or e-mails after work and should not face any disciplinary action for exercising this right. It also directs employers



A Bill introduced in India's Parliament last month says employees have the right not to answer calls or e-mails after work and should not face any disciplinary action for exercising this right. PHOTO: BLOOMBERG

3,315

Number of hours a year an average employee in Mumbai works – the highest in the world.

to negotiate out-of-work hours with employees, and entitles the latter to overtime compensation. Besides prescribing the creation of a national authority to oversee the welfare of employees, it even says any non-adherence to the Bill will cost the employer 1 per cent of

total employees' remuneration. While it has provoked a discussion on the need for better work-life balance, the Bill has been widely described as impractical and utopian in a country that needs to reform labour laws and get other human resources basics right first. It stands a remote chance of being enacted into law soon, more so with political leaders getting drawn into campaigning ahead of a general election due in three months. Ms Sule tells The Straits Times that "one has to start somewhere and push for change", adding: "Why should one want to overwork somebody to the point that they are completely drained." She adds that people have misunderstood the Bill, which is not about making people work less or preventing employers from contacting their workers in emergencies. "It is about bringing in good efficiency for work-life balance that in turn boosts productivity," she says. But industry experts think the Bill is disconnected from the ambitious dynamics of an economy that seeks to develop at double-digit rates and its workers who covet growth. Mr Sunil Goel, managing director of human resources firm Global-Hunt, says: "When firms and employees try to achieve certain things in a short time, when they have limited time to ensure returns for investors' money, it automatically translates into a 24/7-office model." India, he adds, is a long way from countries with mature markets

with clear employee workloads. France, for instance, has laws requiring contracts featuring negotiation with employees on how connected they have to be outside office hours. Still, he acknowledges work-life balance is becoming a greater priority for firms in India as they seek to reduce attrition and boost productivity. A negotiated reinforcement of work-life balance between employers and employees, instead of a legislative push, is what most feel could work better. Ms Sule plans to reintroduce a strengthened version of the Bill later this year. "Maybe not now, but it could be enacted into legislation in a couple of years," she adds.

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Better air in China but ozone levels up

Study links ozone production to fight against PM2.5 particulates

Danson Cheong
China Correspondent
In Beijing

Blue skies in Beijing have become an increasingly common sight, a far cry from the days when roads had to be closed and planes grounded because of severe smog.

The striking change stems from China's efforts to fight air pollution, a fight that has brought about a drastic nationwide decrease in PM2.5 particulates – pollutants so fine they can enter a person's lungs and bloodstream.

But a new study by American and Chinese researchers has shown that China's progress in cleaning up its air might not be all it is made out to be, throwing up lessons for other cities battling smog.

The study, published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences journal in the United States earlier this month, was carried out by Harvard University's John A. Paulson School of Engineering and Applied Sciences and Nanjing University of Information Science and Technology.

It showed that even as PM2.5 levels plunged by as much as 40 per cent, ground-level ozone has spiked.

Researchers say there is a cause-and-effect link between the two. While it is a hazardous pollutant, PM2.5 reacts with the precursors that produce ozone, preventing it from being formed, but its decrease is "speeding up ozone production".

Ozone is produced when volatile organic compounds from burning fossil fuels are oxidised in sunlight in the presence of nitrogen oxides.

"Think of the (PM2.5) particles as sponges that scavenge the highly reactive chemical radicals and prevent the chain of reactions producing ozone," said Harvard's Professor Daniel Jacob, one of the study's co-authors.

The researchers pored over air quality readings from about 1,000 sites across China, logged between 2013 and 2017.

In 2013, China started its "war" on air pollution. Since then, it has put in place a range of measures, from



China's war on air pollution has seen levels of PM2.5 particulates drop by as much as 40 per cent in major cities like Beijing, where blue skies have become a more common sight. Air quality was excellent in the Chinese capital yesterday and Beijingers were out and about in the city's central business district. ST PHOTO: DANSON CHEONG

closing highly-polluting plants to taking cars and trucks off the roads.

Professor Liao Hong from Nanjing University of Information Science and Technology, another co-author, said they noted the "remarkable effect of PM2.5 on ozone" in the North China Plain, an area that includes Beijing and the industrial cities of Shijiazhuang and Tangshan.

PM2.5 concentrations there were the highest, but the area also registered the largest drop in pollutants, said Prof Liao.

While ozone in the atmosphere protects the Earth from harmful solar radiation, on the surface, it

CONTROL OZONE LEVELS TOO

Because PM2.5 is harmful to health, policies should still target it, but extra efforts are needed to reduce (nitrogen oxides) and volatile organic compounds emissions in order to control ozone pollution simultaneously.



PROFESSOR LIAO HONG, from Nanjing University of Information Science and Technology.

can damage people's lungs and affect crop yields.

The pollutant is one of six components of China's air quality index, along with sulphur dioxide, nitrogen oxides, carbon monoxide, PM2.5 and larger airborne particles known as PM10. It has come under increased focus in China's air pollution action plans, which aim to cut emissions of nitrogen oxides and volatile organic compounds by 2020.

Prof Liao said: "Because PM2.5 is harmful to health, policies should still target it, but extra efforts are needed to reduce (nitrogen oxides) and volatile organic compounds

emissions in order to control ozone pollution simultaneously."

The study's findings also offer lessons for countries battling air pollution; even as they curb levels of harmful particulates, measures should also be taken to control ozone levels.

Prof Jacob said: "The same tug-of-war between ozone and PM2.5 is happening elsewhere. When you decrease PM2.5, ozone goes up. The reason it hasn't been noticed elsewhere is because PM2.5 has not been changing so fast."

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Mindanao region voting today on autonomy proposal

MANILA • Citizens in the southern Philippines will vote today on a proposal to give the region greater autonomy, a move that the central government says will help end decades of violent conflict.

More than 2.8 million residents of the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao are expected to vote on a law creating an expanded region called Bangsamoro, which provides more funding, a bigger revenue share and full control of its resources. Another round of voting will be held on Feb 6.

Some local politicians oppose the move, refusing to cede power over their areas to a new political entity that will control the region.

The vote is the culmination of two decades of talks aimed at ending 40 years of insurgency that has killed tens of thousands of people and stifled the development of the



Some local politicians in the Philippines' Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao are opposing the autonomy vote, refusing to cede power over their areas to a new political entity. PHOTO: EPA-EFE

Philippines' second-biggest island.

"The approval of this law will signal peace, and hopefully, the Bangsamoro can hitch on the com-

ing Mindanao boom in investments," said the region's investment board chief Ishak Mastura. President Rodrigo Duterte has

campaigned for the new region, saying it will help him deliver on his election pledge to bring peace and wealth to the southern Mindanao island. The region is located on Mr Duterte's home island, and last Friday in the southern city of Cotabato, he pledged to amend economic provisions in the Constitution once the vote has passed.

"Your approval of this law will not only serve as an expression of your desire to end more than half a century of armed struggle in the region," Mr Duterte said. "It will also serve as a testament to your determination to bring genuine peace and development in Muslim Mindanao."

There will still be challenges for investment even if the plebiscite favours autonomy, Mr Mastura said, including poor infrastructure and high power costs. The region has the highest poverty rate in the Philippines, with more than half of its pop-

ulation considered poor.

Despite its problems, the autonomous Muslim region has shown some promise. Its economy grew to a record 7.3 per cent in 2017, becoming the fifth-fastest growing region and beating national economic growth of 6.7 per cent. Among the multinational companies that have operations in Mindanao are Dole Food, Nestle, and LaFargeHolcim.

Mineral deposits are valued at over US\$300 billion (\$406 billion) or about 40 per cent of the nation's total mineral reserves, according to government estimates. Still, its economy remains highly agricultural, and contributes only 1 per cent to the country's total output.

"If I were an investor, I would watch out for this region," former peace adviser Teresita Deles said. "It has so much economic potential, and its development will help boost our economy further." BLOOMBERG

Taiwan's TCM shops struggle amid strict licensing regime

TAIPEI • Traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) store owner Gu Cheng-pu knows her shop can only stay open as long as her ailing father-in-law lives, their careers hostage to a quirk in Taiwanese law that is killing off the industry.

At the back of her shop in New Taipei City, Ms Gu tips a plate of freshly cut Chinese liquorice roots into a wok of boiling honey, the first step in preparing one of her many traditional remedies.

"Chinese herbal medicine stores are a unique cultural icon," the 36-year-old explains. "They are not just a place where you come when you are sick to pick up medicine."

But shops like hers are dying out – with some 200 closing their doors every year – even though TCM remains wildly popular in Taiwan.

The authorities have not issued any new licences since 1998 and those that exist cannot be passed down to younger generations.

Ms Gu's father-in-law is the licence owner but he recently suffered a stroke and she now fears the worst. "If I am forced to close shop, the biggest regret for me other than losing our livelihood, is losing our tradition," she laments.

The licence shortage stems from an attempt by the authorities in the 1990s to regulate the largely artisanal industry and bring traditional remedies into the purview of the professional medical community. By refusing to issue new licences, the authorities hoped that doctors would offer TCM options in a more regulated and scientific capacity.

"In Taiwan, the simultaneous use of Western and Chinese medicine among the public is very prevalent and we need trained medical personnel to make sure they don't interact with harmful consequences," said Ms Chen Pin-chi, the head of Chinese medicine and pharmacy at the Health and Welfare



Ministry. "We initially hoped that professionally trained Chinese medicine physicians or pharmacists might slowly take over the running of Chinese herbal stores."

But things did not turn out as planned.

The average age of a TCM store licence holder is 61 while the number of remaining stores has halved in the last 20 years to just 7,900.

According to the Compendium of Materia Medica, the 16th-century

text that is the lodestar for TCM practitioners, there are more than 1,500 different kinds of herbs used in Chinese medicine. The average store might stock between 200 and 500 herbs, roots, animal parts and minerals – 355 of which are classified as medicine in Taiwan.

The licence shortage has prompted protests on the streets of Taipei and the government is in talks with industry leaders.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Ms Gu Cheng-pu at work in her family's TCM shop in New Taipei City. Such shops are dying out because the authorities have not issued any new licences since 1998.

PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Search on after car plunges off bridge

GEORGE TOWN • A search and rescue operation was underway yesterday after a car plunged off the Penang Bridge and into the sea, following a collision with another car on the bridge linking Penang Island with mainland Malaysia.

The accident occurred early yesterday morning along the KM4 on the mainland-bound side of the 13.5km bridge, Malaysia's official news agency Bernama reported.

The Perai Fire and Rescue department located on the mainland side of Penang was alerted to the accident at 2.35am.

"Rescuers found a car badly damaged but its driver only lightly injured. We have not been able to ascertain the status of occupants in the other vehicle," Bernama reported the Perai Fire and Rescue chief Azlan Hassan as saying.

A search and rescue operation involving the Marine police was underway, he said.

Bernama cited one witness, who was fishing from one of the pillars of the bridge with a friend at the time of the accident, as saying he saw the car plunging into the sea but could not locate the victims afterwards as it was too dark.

"We saw the car falling into the sea but everything happened so fast and it was dark. We shone our torchlights where it fell but did not see anyone," the agency quoted the witness known as Azrul, who is in his 30s, as saying.

Mr Azrul said he and his friend then alerted the marine police personnel who were patrolling the area.

Freeing of Bashir seen as political move by Jokowi

Analysts point to April polls as reason for cleric's parole, warn of danger he still poses

Wahyudi Soeriaatmadja
Indonesia Correspondent
In Jakarta

The Indonesian government made a bold statement three years ago when it put five of the most dangerous radical clerics in isolation cells to limit their influence beyond the prison walls.

Visitation rights were tightened, with only immediate family allowed. But now, with the election approaching, the most senior among these five – 80-year-old Abu Bakar Bashir – has received President Joko Widodo's blessings for release on parole on humanitarian grounds.

Two academics told The Straits Times that the move by Mr Joko, who is seeking re-election in April, is a political call as he woos Islamist votes. But this will have repercussions, they warned.

The controversial decision was meant to counter accusations by certain quarters that Mr Joko is anti-Islam and that he prosecutes or criminalises ulama, said Dr Noor Huda Ismail, a visiting fellow at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS).

"It is good for the current political situation. This is a short-term political decision with challenging long-term repercussions," said Dr Huda, an Indonesian journalist turned academic. He explained that Bashir is considered to be an ulama by certain quarters.

Mr Joko, 57, is set to square off with his only rival, Mr Prabowo Subianto, 67, who has played the religion card and has been seen cosy up to radical clerics during campaigns ahead of the April 17

presidential polls.

They include Muhammad Rizieq Shihab, who is in self-exile in the Middle East to avoid charges by the Indonesian police over violating pornography laws and insulting the state ideology Pancasila.

Bashir has been serving his 15-year prison term since 2011 for funding a terrorist training camp in Indonesia's Aceh province.

He is widely seen as the spiritual leader of South-east Asia terrorist group Jemaah Islamiah (JI), which operates underground and continues to expand via online platforms.

JI was the mastermind behind the 2002 Bali bombings that killed 202 people, 80 per cent of them foreigners. JI was also behind several other deadly bombings in Jakarta.

"Like it or not, the parole hurts the victims' families. They still feel the wounds today. They are from various partner countries to Indonesia," Dr Huda told ST. "This is local politics that has ramifications regionally and internationally."

Australia, the United States, Japan and Germany are among the countries whose citizens were killed in the bombings.

Dr Quinton Temby, a visiting fellow in the Indonesia Studies Programme at ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute, agrees that the parole given to Bashir is politically motivated.

Dr Temby, an Australian national, said the timing of the early release was probably designed to pre-empt potential criticism of Mr Joko, popularly called Jokowi, over the imminent release of former Jakarta governor Basuki Tjahaja Purnama, whose jail term for blasphemy will end on Thursday.

Basuki, best known by his Chi-



A 2012 file picture of Abu Bakar Bashir, widely regarded as the spiritual leader of terrorist group Jemaah Islamiah, which was behind the 2002 Bali bombings that killed 202 people, 80 per cent of them foreigners. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

nese nickname Ahok, was sentenced to two years' jail in May 2017 after a Jakarta court found him guilty of blasphemy against Islam. The controversial sentence was handed down weeks after the political ally of Mr Joko lost the Jakarta gubernatorial election to Mr Anies Baswedan.

Dr Temby said: "We can see (the parole) as a piece with Jokowi's confused strategy in dealing with the Islamist mobilisations around the Ahok blasphemy case."

IMPACT ON REGIONAL TERRORISM

Bashir's conditional release, according to Dr Temby, is unlikely to contribute to regional terrorism because in the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) group, he was more of a follower than a leader and his family is aligned against the group.

"But the political timing of his release will help to burnish his image as the elder statesman of militant Islamism in Indonesia, even if it is an image that he lacks the charismatic

authority to live up to," added Dr Temby, whose research interests cover Indonesia's political Islam and elections.

Mr Malcolm Brailey, regional di-

rector for Indo-Pacific at The Stabilisation Network, which produces research and analysis that contribute to efforts to reduce violent extremism, echoed Dr Temby's views.

Mr Brailey said Bashir's release is unlikely to have any wider impact in the region among the network of Salaafi Jihadist groups with active operational cells.

The groups, represented by those including JI and ISIS, believe in strict Islamic laws and violently spread and implement their ideology. Unlike ISIS, JI no longer sees Indonesia as a battleground and its members do not consider everyone else outside their group, including Muslims, as apostate (an ideology called Takfiri).

Members of JI, an Al-Qaeda-linked organisation, do not get along with those affiliated with ISIS. There have been reports of brawls between JI-affiliated inmates and ISIS-affiliated inmates in prisons across Indonesia. Their rivalry here reflects a turf war between ISIS and Al-Qaeda in the Middle East and everywhere else.

"Bashir's influence and impact have waned significantly since the days of Jemaah Islamiah..." Mr Brailey told The Straits Times.

Bashir is the founder of Al Mukmin Islamic boarding school in Solo, more commonly called Ngruki, which is known for producing militants.

Dr Huda, an alumni of Ngruki and working to help with counter-terrorism efforts, said that although Bashir's influence has weakened and he is frail, there is still a possibility that he may revive his violent ideology as well as his terror networks locally and overseas.

Bashir's own family members remain disappointed with his oath of allegiance to ISIS and should they manage to convince him to recant before his death, this may boost the standing of those who remained steadfast outside, Mr Brailey said, referring to those who do not support ISIS' caliphate claim.

"But if history teaches us anything, it is to be wary of the dying jackal. Those of us working on countering violent extremism in the region would do well to watch for signs of Bashir's messages of hate and intolerance taking traction, and to actively challenge the lies and deceit of this kind of ideology," Mr Brailey added.

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Bangladesh police nab militant linked to deadly 2016 cafe attack

DHAKA • Bangladesh has arrested a suspected Muslim extremist who allegedly supplied weapons and explosives for a 2016 siege that killed 22 hostages.

Eighteen foreigners were among those shot and hacked to death in the 10-hour stand-off at the Holey Artisan Bakery – an upmarket cafe in Dhaka – before commandos stormed the building and rescued about two dozen people.

The extremist, Mamunur Rashid, 30, was a key "decision-maker" in Jamayetul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB), a banned home-grown militant outfit blamed for the attack.

Rashid was arrested outside the capital Dhaka while travelling on a bus, Mufti Mahmud Khan, a spokesman for the elite Rapid Action Battalion, said yesterday.

Mr Khan said Rashid supplied money, arms, ammunition and explosives for the attack. "He hid in a neighbouring country and tried to reorganise the group. They were also planning to rescue their accomplices from custody," he added.

Rashid, a former computer operator and Islamic seminary student, also provided logistical support to militants involved in several deadly attacks on religious minorities in the country's north, Mr Khan said.

Eight militants went on trial in a court in Dhaka last month for the cafe attack. Mr Khan said Rashid was one of two men charged despite not being present, while the other six were already in custody.

The Holey Artisan Bakery siege fuelled fears over violent Islamist



Bangladesh's Rapid Action Battalion officers with Mamunur Rashid, who has been accused of supplying money, arms, ammunition and explosives for a 2016 siege that killed 22 hostages in a Dhaka cafe. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

groups in the Muslim-majority nation of 165 million people.

The government launched a crackdown against extremists immediately after the attack, killing nearly 100 alleged extremists, including several top JMB leaders.

The attack marked a violent escalation from a spate of high-profile mur-

ders in the country since 2013, with extremists targeting Bangladeshi atheist writers, rights activists, gays, foreigners and religious minorities.

Bangladesh last week banned the release of a film based on the cafe attack, saying it would tarnish the country's image.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

"Did You Know" Monthly Talk Series (Public Lecture)

"ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY IN WORLD'S FASTEST GROWING REGIONS: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR WATER AND WASTE MANAGEMENT"

SYNOPSIS: Clean, reliable water is critical for sustainable economic development, human and ecological health. Water is highly susceptible to climate change and environmental pollution. Approximately half of the world's populated cities have more than one million people today. By 2050, 2.5 billion more people may live in cities, producing 70% of greenhouse gases and consuming vast amounts of energy. Cities are increasingly struggling with waste management. Many chemical wastes enter the environment with innumerable transformation products formed during water treatment processes risk polluting drinking water. Fortunately, technological advances in water purification, waste treatment, and analytical characterization are providing sustainable solutions for protecting public health and the environment. This presentation will discuss the history, evolution of water and waste treatment technologies and future opportunities for global sustainability.

SPEAKER: Dr. Shane Snyder, a Professor of Civil & Environmental Engineering and the Executive Director of the Nanyang Environment & Water Research Institute (NEWRI) at the Nanyang Technological University (NTU Singapore), was formerly a Professor of Chemical & Environmental Engineering and co-Director of the Water & Energy Sustainable Technology (WEST) Center at the University of Arizona, USA. His research has focused on emerging water pollutants for over 20 years, publishing over 200 manuscripts and book chapters on emerging contaminant analysis, treatment, and toxicology. The editor-in-chief for Chemosphere, Dr. Snyder's was invited thrice to brief the US Congress on emerging issues in water quality. He is also a Fellow of the International Water Association, a member of the WHO's Drinking Water Advisory Panel, served on several US EPA expert panels and the US National Academy of Science's National Research Council Committee on Water Reuse, and was LuxResearch's top 30 leaders in water research.

PANELLISTS:

Ms Victoria Rigby Delmon
Senior Counsel,
Water Supply and
Sanitation Global Practice,
The World Bank

Mr Pang Chee Meng
Director (Industry Development),
PUB,
Singapore's National Water Agency

DETAILS:

Date: 31 January 2019, Thursday
Time: 7pm - 9pm
Venue: Tan Chin Tuan Lecture Theatre
Nanyang Technological University,
50 Nanyang Avenue, Singapore 639798

REGISTRATION:

Admission is free. Registration is required.

To register, please visit the following link:
<https://tinyurl.com/ntujan2019talk>

You may also scan the following QR code.

Free chartered bus services will be provided from Jurong East MRT Station. Participants can also take campus shuttle buses from Pioneer MRT Station to the lecture venue. Details will be sent to registered participants via email closer to the event date.

For any enquiries, please email:
community-engagement@ntu.edu.sg

Wall Street braces itself for tighter oversight of banks

Progressive Democrats on powerful House committee seen making life hard for bankers

WASHINGTON • Wall Street is bracing itself for a wave of intense scrutiny as a group of progressive Democrats, including social media star Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, joined a powerful House of Representatives committee overseeing banking activities.

"It's a huge victory," said Ms Ocasio-Cortez, at 29 the youngest member of Congress and a self-described socialist – a word that shocks conservatives, who brandish it as a dire threat.

"I cannot stress how important this moment is. Dems are putting

members who rejected corporate campaign money on a committee overseeing Wall St," she tweeted.

Ms Ocasio-Cortez, often referred to by her initials AOC, will bring public attention to the ordinarily drab committee via her strong social media presence that includes 2.5 million followers on Twitter.

Wall Street is trying to figure out the goals of the Democrats, now in charge of the House of Representatives which had, for the past eight years, been under the control of the Republicans.

While the Senate remains in Re-

publican hands and ready to block dramatic changes, Democratic control of the House promises at least to make life difficult for bankers, with tighter industry oversight and lengthy public hearings.

The symbolism is already striking. The committee is headed by Mrs Maxine Waters, 80, a regular target of President Donald Trump's barbs and the first woman and first African-American to head the panel.

Mrs Waters has warned the financial sector that the days of banking deregulation and lax oversight are over. In her first speech as committee chairman last Wednesday, she said the 2008 financial crisis "was a result of Wall Street running amok, with abusive institutions peddling



Ms Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez will bring attention to the committee via her social media presence that includes 2.5 million Twitter followers. PHOTO: BLOOMBERG

toxic products... with no agency responsible for prioritising consumer protection. Ultimately, the economy was sent tumbling into the abyss".

"Our fear," a banking source told Agence France-Presse, "is that she (Mrs Waters) will reinforce oversight of big banks."

The source expects to see "more CEO hearings in Congress" with the Democrats in charge.

Half of the new committee members belong to the Progressive Caucus, the left wing of the Democratic

Party. Several made a splash when they ran for office in last November's election. They include Ms Ayanna Pressley, the first African-American congresswoman from Massachusetts, and Ms Rashida Tlaib, the first Palestinian-American and one of the two first female Muslim lawmakers in Washington.

The newcomers favour tighter banking oversight, but also promise to fight for easier access to credit, more industry diversity, and against housing discrimination.

"I'm looking forward to digging



Protesters in "wall" outfits demonstrating in Washington last Saturday during the third annual women's march. In his first public offer to the Democrats since the government shutdown, US President Donald Trump has offered temporary protections for 700,000 young immigrants in the country without authorisation in exchange for funding for a wall along the southern border. PHOTO: REUTERS

Trump offers deportation protection – for wall funds

WASHINGTON • US President Donald Trump, facing a growing public backlash over the partial government shutdown, has shifted course and offered Democrats a deal: temporary protections for roughly 700,000 young immigrants in the country without authorisation in exchange for US\$5.7 billion (\$\$7.7 billion) in funding for a wall along the country's southern border.

But the proposal, which Mr Trump unveiled in a 13-minute address from the White House last Saturday, appeared dead on arrival in the Capitol.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi rejected it even before Mr Trump spoke, and Senator Chuck Schumer, the Democratic leader,

denounced the offer as "not a compromise but more hostage taking".

With the government shutdown entering its fifth week and polls showing a majority of the public blaming Mr Trump, the President's advisers have been searching for an exit strategy.

Saturday's speech grew out of talks that Vice-President Mike Pence and the President's son-in-law and senior adviser, Mr Jared Kushner, have had in recent days with lawmakers including Senator Mitch McConnell, the majority leader.

The proposal was Mr Trump's first public offer to Democrats since the partial shutdown began nearly a month ago.

It came after an acrimonious week, in which Ms Pelosi told the President he could not deliver his State of the Union address in the Capitol until the shutdown was over, and Mr Trump retaliated by grounding a plane that was supposed to take Ms Pelosi on a fact-finding mission to Afghanistan.

In casting the plan as a compromise, Mr Trump sought to shift pressure to the Democrats to end the shutdown.

But Democrats continued to insist they will not negotiate with Mr Trump over border security until the government reopens.

Over the course of his administration, Mr Trump has repeatedly sought to curb both legal and illegal

immigration. He has already revoked Temporary Protected Status (TPS), which offers crucial protection for immigrants, for people from some Latin American and African countries.

He has also moved to rescind Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, or DACA, an Obama-era programme that shielded the young immigrants known as "Dreamers" from deportation.

In the deal he outlined over the weekend, Mr Trump offered to restore TPS protection for 300,000 people and said he would allow 700,000 Dreamers to keep their protections for three more years in exchange for US\$5.7 billion for a border barrier. NYTIMES

Trade deal could very well happen with China, Trump says

WASHINGTON • US President Donald Trump said there has been progress towards a trade deal with China, but denied that he was considering lifting tariffs on Chinese imports.

"Things are going very well with China and with trade," he told reporters at the White House last Saturday, adding that he had seen some "false reports" indicating that US tariffs on Chinese products would be lifted.

"If we make a deal, certainly we would not have sanctions and if we don't make a deal, we will," he said. "We've had a very extraordinary number of meetings and a deal could very well happen with China."

Chinese Vice-Premier Liu He will visit the US on Jan 30 and 31 for the next round of trade negotiations with Washington. That follows lower-level negotiations held in Beijing last week to resolve the bitter dispute between the world's two largest economies by March 2, when the US is scheduled to increase tariffs on US\$200 billion (\$\$270 billion) worth of Chinese goods.

According to sources briefed on the ongoing negotiations, the US is pushing for regular reviews of China's progress on pledged trade reforms as a condition for a trade deal and could again resort to tariffs if it deems Beijing has violated the agreement. "The threat of tariffs is not going away, even if there is a deal," said one of the sources.

Chinese negotiators were not keen on the idea of regular compliance checks, the source said, but the US proposal "didn't derail negotiations".

A Chinese source said the United States wants "periodic assessments" but it was not yet clear how often.

"It looks like humiliation," the source said. "But perhaps the two sides could find a way to save face for the Chinese government."

The Trump administration has imposed import tariffs on Chinese goods to put pressure on Beijing to meet a long list of demands that would rewrite the terms of trade between the two countries.

The demands include changes to China's policies on intellectual property protection, technology transfers, industrial subsidies and other trade barriers. REUTERS

WorldBriefs

'World's oldest man' dies in Japan

TOKYO • The "world's oldest man" Masazo Nonaka, who was born just two years after the Wright brothers launched humanity's first powered flight, died yesterday aged 113, Japanese media said.

Mr Nonaka was born in July 1905, according to Guinness World Records – just months before Albert Einstein published his special theory of relativity. Guinness officially recognised Mr Nonaka as the oldest living man last year.

Japan has one of the world's highest life



Mr Masazo Nonaka, 113, was born months before Albert Einstein published his special theory of relativity.

expectancies and was home to several people recognised as among the oldest humans to have ever lived. AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

India sacks bankers in huge fraud case

NEW DELHI • India has sacked two executives of state-run Punjab National Bank for allegedly failing to prevent a US\$2 billion (\$\$2.7 billion) fraud, two sources said yesterday, nearly a year after the country's biggest bank scam came to light.

This is the first instance of sacking of the bank's employees since it said that billionaire diamond jeweller Nirav Modi and his uncle had for years fraudulently raised billions of dollars in foreign credit by conspiring with staff at the bank. REUTERS

Russians rally over islands' ownership

MOSCOW • A crowd gathered in Moscow yesterday to defend Russia's ownership of a chain of islands captured by Soviet troops from Japan during the final days of World War II.

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, due to meet Russian President Vladimir Putin in Moscow tomorrow, is pushing for a treaty for the isles, known as the Southern Kuriles in Russia and the Northern Territories in Japan. Russia has said its sovereignty over them was not up for discussion. REUTERS

Trump at event for 4 Americans killed in Syria attack

They were victims of suicide bombing claimed by ISIS after US leader declared group 'defeated'

DOVER (Delaware) • US President Donald Trump attended a silent, solemn ceremony over the weekend to receive the remains of four Americans killed in northern Syria in an attack claimed by the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) group.

The attack took place after he declared the militants "largely defeated".

He flew to Dover Air Force Base in Delaware with Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and Acting Defence Secretary Patrick Shanahan, where they walked up the cargo ramp of the C-17 cargo plane that had brought home the remains.

Inside, a chaplain said a prayer, and a loud "Amen" could be heard. Mr Trump and the rest of his delegation, which included senior army and navy officers, emerged from the plane after several minutes to stand at attention, saluting.

A six-member Navy ceremonial team then brought out a flag-draped casket bearing former Navy



President Donald Trump and his delegation of army and navy officers saluting as a ceremonial team carries a casket bearing Mr Scott Wirtz, a civilian employee of the US Department of Defence, who was killed along with three members of the US military during a recent attack in Syria. The ceremony was held at Dover Air Force Base in Dover, Delaware. PHOTO: REUTERS

Seal Scott Wirtz, who was working as a Department of Defence civilian when he was killed.

About 100 people who had connections to the victims watched as the team slow-marched the casket to a waiting van.

Then came caskets with the other victims – a soldier, a navy cryptologic technician and a civilian contractor.

Mr Trump had earlier tweeted that he would be in Dover "with the families of 4 very special people who lost their lives in service to our Country!"

Nineteen people, including the four Americans, were killed last Wednesday in a suicide bombing at a small restaurant in the flashpoint

northern Syrian town of Manbij. It was the deadliest attack on American troops since they were deployed to Syria in 2014 to assist local forces against ISIS.

It came after Mr Trump's announcement last month that he was ordering a full withdrawal of the 2,000 US troops from Syria, shocking allies and leading to the resignation of Defence Secretary James Mattis.

Senior US officials have since given contradictory statements about US intentions. But the Pentagon said it had begun the withdrawal, although it was unclear how long that would take.

After sweeping across swathes of Syria and Iraq in 2014, the ISIS'

cross-border "caliphate" has been erased by multiple offensives and is now confined to a tiny embattled enclave in eastern Syria close to the Iraqi border.

But despite the stinging defeats, ISIS has proved it is still capable of carrying out deadly attacks using hideouts in the sprawling desert or sleeper cells in the towns.

Mr Trump told reporters last Saturday that his Syria policy had made progress but that some work remained in destroying ISIS targets. He defended his plans for a withdrawal.

"It's moving along very well but when I took over, it was a total mess. But you do have to ask yourself, we're killing ISIS for Russia, for

Iran, for Syria, for Iraq, for a lot of other places. At some point, you want to bring our people back home," he said.

Republican Senator Lindsey Graham of South Carolina, a Trump ally and an influential voice on foreign policy who has criticised the Syria plan, suggested the President's stance emboldened ISIS militants and "set in motion enthusiasm by the enemy we're fighting". He urged Mr Trump to reconsider.

Mr Trump previously travelled to Dover in 2017, shortly after his presidency began, for the return of the remains of a Navy Seal who died during a raid in Yemen.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE, REUTERS, BLOOMBERG

'Terrorist' arrested after bomb blast rocks Damascus

DAMASCUS • A bomb blast hit the capital of war-torn Syria yesterday and a "terrorist" was arrested, state media said, in a rare attack in the city that has been largely insulated from violence.

A Britain-based war monitor said a "huge explosion" near a military intelligence office in southern Damascus had left a number of people dead and wounded.

The Syrian Arab News Agency said a "bomb blast" had caused an explosion "without leaving any victims". It added: "There is confirmation of reports that a terrorist has been arrested."

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) told AFP that "the explosion took place near a security branch in the south of the city" and that some people were killed and injured, although it could not yet verify the toll.

It was unclear if the blast was caused by a bomb that was planted or a suicide attack, according to the human rights monitor, which relies on a network of sources in-

side the country. It said that shooting followed the explosion.

Syria is locked in a civil war that has killed more than 360,000 people and displaced millions since a brutal crackdown on anti-government protests in 2011 spiralled into full conflict. Damascus has been largely spared the worst of the violence but several bomb attacks have shaken the city.

Another bombing yesterday killed three people and wounded nine others in the Syrian city of Afrin on the first anniversary of a Turkish offensive on the Kurdish-majority region, the SOHR said.

With military backing from Russia, President Bashar al-Assad's forces have retaken large parts of Syria from rebels and militants, and now control almost two-thirds of the country. The Syrian regime last May reclaimed an area held by the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria in southern Damascus, cementing total control over the capital for the first time in six years. AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE



Forensic specialists at the site of the explosion in the central Mexican state of Hidalgo which killed more than 70 people who had rushed to collect petrol from a punctured pipeline last Friday. PHOTO: DPA

79 die in fuel pipeline blaze in Mexico

TLAHUELILPAN (Mexico) • An explosion and fire in central Mexico killed at least 79 people after hundreds swarmed to the site of an illegal fuel-line tap to collect petrol amid a government crackdown on fuel theft, officials said.

Health Secretary Jorge Alcocer Varela said yesterday that another 66 people remained hospitalised.

The blast last Friday occurred near Tlahuelilpan, a town of 20,000 people about an hour's drive north of Mexico City.

As soldiers guarded the scene

over the weekend, forensic specialists in white suits worked among the blackened corpses – many frozen in the unnatural positions in which they had fallen – and civilians stepped cautiously along searching for missing relatives.

Firefighters and ambulances run by state oil company Pemex had rushed to help victims with burns and take the injured to hospitals.

Last Friday, when the authorities heard that fuel traffickers had punctured the pipeline, an army unit of more than 20 soldiers arrived and

attempted to block off the area, said Defence Secretary Luis Crescencio Sandoval. But the soldiers were unable to contain the estimated 700

civilians, including entire families, who had swarmed in to collect the leaking petrol in jerrycans and buckets, according to witnesses.

The soldiers had been moved away from the pipeline to avoid any risk of confrontation with the crowd when the blast occurred, some two hours after the pipeline was breached, said Mr Sandoval.

President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador, a leftist who took office only weeks ago, travelled to the scene early last Saturday.

He did not fault the soldiers, saying: "The attitude of the army was correct. It is not easy to impose order on a crowd."

But he vowed to continue fighting the growing problem of fuel theft and called on the government to extend aid to those affected. AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE, REUTERS

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May's office blasts MPs' Brexit moves

It finds reports of lawmakers' plot to seize control of exit process 'extremely concerning'

LONDON • British Prime Minister Theresa May's Downing Street office said reported plots by lawmakers to seize control of the Brexit process from the government were "extremely concerning".

Downing Street yesterday blasted the reported moves by MPs seeking to rewrite the rules of the House of Commons in an attempt to take control of the business of the lower chamber in order to frustrate Mrs May's Brexit plans.

Groups of MPs are planning to table such amendments this week, newspapers reported yesterday.

"The British public voted to leave the European Union and it is vital that elected politicians deliver upon that verdict," a Downing Street spokesman said.

"Any attempt to remove the government's power to meet the legal

conditions of an orderly exit at this moment of historic significance is extremely concerning. This news should serve as a reminder to those MPs who want to deliver Brexit that they need to vote for it – otherwise there is a danger that Parliament could stop Brexit."

Mrs May is due to spell out to lawmakers today what her plans are for Brexit following MPs' overwhelming rejection of the divorce deal agreed between London and Brussels.

She was also due to speak to ministers yesterday on a conference call, a government source said, as she tries to navigate a way through the competing visions for the future – from a second referendum to staying in the EU.

Mrs May has opened talks with other parties to try to find a way to



British Prime Minister Theresa May is due to tell lawmakers today what her plans are for Brexit after MPs' rejection of the divorce deal. PHOTO: DPA

break the deadlock. But with Labour refusing to take part until Mrs May rules out leaving the EU on March 29 without a deal, some lawmakers fear those talks will change little.

International Trade Secretary Liam Fox warned of a "political tsunami" if MPs fail to deliver on the 2016 referendum vote to leave the bloc.

He also slammed people calling for Mrs May to rule out a no-deal Brexit – a key demand of the Labour main opposition – saying the "most stupid thing possible" in a negotiation is to "give away your strongest card".

"Failure to deliver Brexit would produce a yawning gap between Parliament and the people, a schism in our political system with unknowable consequences," Dr Fox, a senior pro-Brexit Cabinet minister, wrote in The Sunday Telegraph newspaper.

"It is time for MPs to deliver on the promises they made. It is a matter of honour and a matter of duty."

Meanwhile, The Sunday Times newspaper reported yesterday that Mrs May plans to seek a bilateral treaty with the Irish government as a way to remove the contentious backstop arrangement from Britain's divorce deal with the European Union.

The report said aides to Mrs May thought a deal with Ireland would

remove the opposition to her Brexit plan from the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), which supports Mrs May's minority government, and from pro-Brexit rebels in her Conservative Party.

However, the Irish edition of the same newspaper quoted a senior Irish government source as saying the bilateral treaty proposal was "not something we would entertain" and a second senior political source as saying it would not work with the European Commission.

Many Conservatives and the DUP oppose the backstop that the European Union insists on as a guarantee to avoid a hard border between the Irish Republic and Northern Ireland.

Earlier on Saturday, Irish Foreign Minister Simon Coveney said Dublin's commitment to the Brexit divorce deal struck with the British government was "absolute", including the border backstop arrangement. AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE, REUTERS

SEE OPINION A15



The facade of the new concert hall hosting the first "Winter at Tantora" music carnival among the ruins of Al-Ula in north-western Saudi Arabia. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Saudi music fest seen as lure to heritage trove

AL-ULA (Saudi Arabia) • Bathed in light, musicians belt out melodies among pre-Islamic desert ruins in north-western Saudi Arabia, a heritage trove at the centre of efforts to put the reclusive kingdom on the tourism map.

"Winter at Tantora" is the latest music carnival in the Islamic kingdom, where such events were unheard of just two years ago. It is hosted by the Al-Ula governorate, where Nabatean tombs and art are chiselled into caramel-hued rock.

Spread over eight weekends until Feb 9, the main events are held in an auditorium made of mirrored glass that has drawn international artists, including Lebanese singer Majida El Roumi and French classi-

cal violinist Renaud Capucon.

And it shines a spotlight on a long-isolated area seen widely as an open-air museum.

"Saudi Arabia is turning a new page," said Mr Zainab al-Kadadi, 29, a Riyadh-based banker. He attended a musical weekend that included a tour of an Ottoman-era train station and sand dune bashing, a sport that involves driving across challenging desert landscapes.

The festival is seen as a soft opening of Al-Ula, an area being touted as the centrepiece of Saudi attractions, as the conservative petrostate prepares to open up to international tourists.

Building a tourism industry from scratch is at the heart of an ambi-

tious government plan to prepare the Arab world's biggest economy for a post-oil era, a mission fraught with challenges. The kingdom forbids alcohol and has a strict social code.

Recent events that drew international censure – notably the gruesome murder last year of critic Jamal Khashoggi and a sweeping crackdown on dissent – appear to have made the challenge more acute.

"Saudi Arabia has great tourism potential but after what happened, it's hard to come here and say 'Everything is wow, everything is amazing'," said a Westerner who was among a group of global social media influencers invited by the

kingdom for an all-expenses-paid trip to Al-Ula.

Saudi Arabia is seeking to preserve heritage sites that predate the Prophet Muhammad's life in the seventh century.

The sites have long been neglected or vandalised because glorifying them is considered blasphemous by religious conservatives.

With French support in Al-Ula, archaeological teams are undertaking a massive survey of key sites.

Five-star resorts are being planned to accommodate tourists and Al-Ula is expected to fully open up to foreign tourists within three to five years, said an official from the Royal Al-Ula Commission.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

'Yellow vests' clash with police across France in protests

PARIS • Clashes broke out throughout France as an estimated 84,000 "yellow vests" demonstrators took to the streets on Saturday in a 10th consecutive weekend of protests against President Emmanuel Macron's government.

The demonstrations passed off relatively peacefully in Paris where 7,000 turned up, although there were brief scuffles between police and demonstrators in the Invalides district.

Protesters threw firecrackers, bottles and stones at police, who responded with water canons and tear gas to push them back.

"Macron, resign!" some of the protesters shouted.

The "yellow vests" protests – named after the fluorescent jackets French motorists are required to carry in their cars – began in November over plans to raise fuel taxes. The number of demonstrators on Saturday was roughly the

same as last week.

The fuel tax hikes were subsequently scrapped, but the movement has morphed into a broader protest against Mr Macron's government and general anger over taxes and the cost of living.

"How can we continue to live with so little?" said Mr Bernard Grignan, a 65-year-old retired manager who took part in the Paris demonstrations.

In Paris, some demonstrators carried mock coffins symbolising the 10 people who have died during the protests, mainly due to accidents when demonstrators blocked roads.

Last month's demonstrations saw some of the worst violence in decades in Paris, as rioters burned cars and vandalised shops. Protests in the capital this month have not seen the same level of trouble, although a video of a former French boxing champion punching and kicking police shocked many.



A "yellow vest" protester looking at a damaged bus-stop in the aftermath of a demonstration in the southern city of Toulouse on Saturday. PHOTO: EPA-EFE

Despite a relative decline in crowd trouble in Paris, however, disturbances have flared up in other cities. According to official figures, the biggest demonstration on Saturday occurred in the southern city of Toulouse, where around 10,000 people took part.

The demonstration turned violent as evening fell, and protesters vandalised a bank and shops. Eight people were injured and there were 23 arrests.

Reuters correspondents also reported disturbances in Bordeaux, Lyon and Marseille.

Mr Macron has launched a series of national debates to help quell public discontent and restore his standing.

Far-right leader Marine Le Pen – soundly beaten by Mr Macron in the 2017 presidential election – is looking to take advantage of the "yellow vests" crisis and win ground in May's European parliament elections. On Saturday, she reiterated her support for the protesters at a meeting near Marseille, at which she described the movement as a "legitimate" and "courageous" revolt. REUTERS

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Shutdown does no credit to America

The wall between President Donald Trump and Congress shows no sign of coming down. On the 29th day of the longest government shutdown in American history, Mr Trump made an offer he knew Speaker Nancy Pelosi would resist. In exchange for US\$5.7 billion (\$\$7.7 billion) to build a wall on the Mexican border, he promised temporary protection for “dreamers” – the hundreds of thousands of immigrants who arrived in the US illegally as children. Non-starter, Mrs Pelosi said, even before he had reached the podium. The Democrats seek citizenship for the dreamers – seen as potential voters – and for the shutdown to end before talks on border security and immigration.

There is little incentive for the Democrats to

give in. A Pew survey found that 58 per cent of Americans oppose the wall. Of these, nine in 10 do not want a compromise if that includes funding for the wall. The 40 per cent who do support Mr Trump’s wall are as resolutely opposed to any deal that excludes the wall. Hence, the prolonged political arm-wrestling that borders on the petty, including Mrs Pelosi rescinding an invitation to the President to deliver the State of Union address and Mr Trump grounding the military plane that was to take her on an official trip to Afghanistan.

Beyond opinion polls that guide political tactics lies the neglected terrain of leadership. The wall is no fix for America’s broken immigration policy. Nearly 11 million people are in the country ille-

gally. But Mr Trump’s focus on the wall has more to do with politics than governance: Arrests for illegal crossings along the Mexican border are at a 45-year low and those who slip in this way are outnumbered by over-stayers who fly into the country legally. The wall is intended to appease supporters who feel threatened by the loss of their white majority status, as trends predict. The wall can be no more than a symbolic solution to a problem which needs socio-economic remedies.

The Democrats can hold out at least as long as the President. But the blame directed at Mr Trump will be more evenly spread as the shutdown begins to bite. Consumer confidence, business sentiment and growth projections are soften-

ing. Everyday acts – getting a tax refund, a mortgage approval or clearing security to board a plane – face delays. Nearly a million federal employees have not been paid. Overseas, the effectiveness of US diplomacy is undermined. Mr Trump was forced to withdraw his delegation from Davos where trade talks with the Chinese were expected. For allies, a question mark looms about America’s dependability. Rivals have one more reason to jeer at a chaotic democracy that cannot effectively deliver public goods. Eventually, a compromise will be reached, and the government will resume. But, at the same time as Brexit wreaks havoc on Britain, these are unfortunate setbacks for all who believe in democracy.

GlobalAffairs

Theresa May’s risky game of chicken

As March 29 deadline looms, she is still betting either the EU or British MPs would give in to her rejected Brexit plan



Jonathan Eyal

LONDON • If all goes according to plan, British Prime Minister Theresa May will face the serried ranks of 650 Members of Parliament in London later today to reveal to an increasingly apprehensive nation her new plan designed to take Britain out of the European Union.

There is not a moment to lose. Having spent two years negotiating a treaty for Brexit – as the process of Britain’s divorce from the EU is universally known – only to see it thrown out by MPs in the largest parliamentary defeat ever suffered by a British government, Mrs May now has barely two more months to invent another treaty that is acceptable to legislators, or she risks having Britain simply crash out of the union, with catastrophic implications for everything ranging from the country’s food and medicine supplies to its transport infrastructure to its international relations.

But the indications are that all she will do today is repackage proposals that were already rejected, while repeating her appeals to European leaders to give Britain a better deal, in the full knowledge that none of this will make the slightest bit of difference.

Welcome to the bizarre world of British politics today, a curious mix of total fantasy and sheer recklessness, presided over by an isolated prime minister who has run out of options and yet continues to hope that something, somehow, may emerge to save her from utter ruin.

England is no longer the “mother of Parliaments” – as British politician John Bright immodestly claimed it to be two centuries ago – but the mother of all blunders.

At first sight, it is difficult not to sympathise with Mrs May’s predicament. She did not push for a referendum on Britain’s continued EU membership; Mr David Cameron, her predecessor in the prime minister’s seat, did so back in 2016, in the vain hope that this may settle differences within his ruling Conservative Party.

Mrs May did not vote to leave the EU either; during the referendum campaign, she supported the



“remain” camp. So, when she became prime minister in the wake of Mr Cameron’s resignation, she was landed with the job of taking Britain out of the EU, a policy she never advocated.

And there is no question that this was always bound to be a thankless task, for it is impossible to sever legal, economic and political links built over almost half a century in a matter of a few months without inviting major controversies or causing major problems.

ERRORS UPON ERRORS

Still, none of this absolves her of responsibility for the grievous errors that landed her country in the predicament it is today.

The first, and certainly her most significant, mistake was to seek to interpret what Brexit actually meant. The people of Britain opted, by a very narrow margin, to leave the EU at a time when nobody knew what this meant; plenty of countries have joined the EU over the years, but no country ever left. So, this was a pathway through uncharted territory, a route which Mrs May could have designed in any way she pleased.

But instead of transforming this nebulous situation into a strength by keeping her options open, she rushed to close them. In a series of speeches, she told the Europeans

that while Britain wants “the broadest possible access to the EU markets”, Britain would also reimpose its own border controls against EU citizens, refuse to accept the jurisdiction of European courts and insist on regaining the right to forge separate trade deals with the rest of the world.

Mrs May claimed that this was what the people of Britain wanted when they voted to leave the EU; in the robotic fashion for which she is now famous, she kept repeating that “Brexit means Brexit”. In practice, however, these were her arbitrary interpretations, designed more to keep the peace within her Conservative Party than to articulate the interests of a nation.

Her decision to call a general election in the middle of this Brexit mayhem was another catastrophic error, for the electorate voted more out of frustration than with logic, and she ended up losing the parliamentary majority she previously enjoyed.

And then, there were the tactical mishaps that could have been avoided if she had stopped to think before acting. Was it wise to start the divorce negotiations with the EU – talks which, according to existing treaties, must be completed in two years – without having a proper negotiating team and an agreed negotiating position?

And was it wise to give Ireland a guarantee that no final Brexit treaty would be signed without the Irish being fully satisfied about the arrangements surrounding Northern Ireland, which is part of the United Kingdom? This promise, which effectively gives the Irish a veto over the future deal between Britain and the EU, is now the biggest stumbling block to a deal. But it was invented by none other than Mrs May, and the British Premier is now in the curious position of asking for concessions on a problem she herself created.

At no point in the entire process did she bother to test the mood of legislators in London, to work out what may be acceptable to those who ultimately have to approve her treaty. Indeed, she fought tooth and nail to avoid consulting Parliament altogether, elevated secrecy in the negotiations with the EU to a virtue, and perpetuated the myth that it was up to the British to decide how much or how little they wished to “grant” concessions to the Europeans who, allegedly, needed Britain more than the British needed Europe.

FORMIDABLE E.U. MACHINE

The reality was, of course, entirely different. The British negotiating strategy, which assumed that

London would be able to divide the Europeans between themselves and extract the concessions London needed, backfired spectacularly.

Faced with Britain’s demands, the remaining 27 EU member states did what they always do in such crises: They “bureaucratise” the problem by transforming what was essentially a political challenge into an interminable bureaucratic negotiation process.

And, while the EU may have many flaws, it has one unshakeable strength – a formidable ability to negotiate day and night on the tiniest of details, since it has a disciplined and well-trained bureaucracy that does nothing else. The idea that the plucky little Brits would be able to run rings around this bureaucracy was always nonsense; for most of the time, British officials had little notion of what was being discussed and, to this day, most British politicians have only a scant idea of what the EU institutions are, let alone how they work.

In the end, Mrs May eked out a miserable treaty that offered Britain little more than promises for the future, in return for real British commitments and money now.

It takes some talent for a British prime minister to annoy the entire

political elite, but Mrs May achieved that; her deal was rejected by 432 out of 650 MPs, the biggest such majority in Britain’s parliamentary history. And when the votes were counted, both Remainers and Brexiters in Britain cheered. At long last, Mrs May succeeded in unifying the nation, against herself.

REMAINING OPTIONS

Even at this late stage, Mrs May has two obvious choices that can avert disaster.

The first is to accept that, while Britain would leave the EU, it will remain a member of Europe’s single market, very much like Norway and Switzerland currently are. Such a deal is hers for the asking, and it could be concluded with the EU in days. It is also an arrangement that will command the support of a majority of MPs in Parliament.

The other alternative is to go for another referendum and put the deal to the people with a straight choice between leaving or reversing the decision to leave the EU. That too could command the support of Parliament.

But instead of going for either of these options, she has decided to continue with what she has done until now – insist that the deal she negotiated is the only one feasible, ask the Europeans to tone down their conditions and refuse to ask for an extension of the deadline of Britain’s membership in the EU, which remains March 29.

In effect, Mrs May is playing a game of chicken against the EU and most of her country’s MPs. She assumes that, faced with the prospect of Britain crashing out of the EU with no deal, either the Europeans would blink first and grant her the concessions she wants, or legislators in London would relent and approve her deal.

It is a procrastination strategy with monumental risks, conducted by a politician who has lost every single one of her gambles. And chances are high that, as she persists in leading her country straight beyond a cliff, Parliament itself will take charge of the Brexit process.

MPs are debating resolutions that will prevent Mrs May from pulling Britain out of the EU without a deal, force her to extend the negotiations, or even push her to conduct new elections or a new referendum. The British Prime Minister is not only losing any credibility with Europe, but she is also about to lose the last shreds of her authority in London.

Chances are now high that Britain will not ever properly leave the EU, and will not ever be a normal EU member either.

And the lessons of this entire sad affair is that Britain’s Brexiters always underestimated the EU’s strengths, while the supporters of the EU in Britain overestimated the union’s generosity.

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Advocates of an open economy face rough road

Much depends on the evolution of domestic politics in high-income countries, especially the US

Martin Wolf

History does not repeat itself, but it often rhymes – words sometimes reputed to have been said by Mark Twain. Even if he did not say this, he should have done.

Since the industrial revolution, the world economy has experienced two great waves of economic integration or, as we now call it, “globalisation”: in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and the late 20th and early 21st centuries.

Conflict among great powers, economic depression, nationalism and protectionism killed the first. The same combination, if in a different historical sequence, might yet kill the second.

Last time, the ruin started with World War I. The Great Depression and soaring protection came later. This time, the rot seems to have begun with the great recession, after the 2008 crash. Protection and rising tension between great powers – the United States and China, in this case – followed.

But both stories are rooted in the same reality: the difficulty of maintaining an open world economy. History may rhyme, but it has not repeated.

By ignoring the advice of foolish reactionaries, policymakers managed the recent recession vastly better than their predecessors did the depression of the 1930s.

Instead of a collapse in output and trade, this era has seen no more than a setback. Some of it was even desirable, notably the decline in irresponsible cross-border, short-term lending. The growth of trade has slowed in relation to world output but not collapsed.

Nevertheless, the pressures on globalisation are real. What explains the slowdown in the growth of trade? The weakness of investment in the post-crisis period is one factor. Another is the exhaustion of opportunities for the unbundling of global supply chains in goods (the distribution of parts of integrated production processes across countries).

Instead, we see evidence of “reshoring” (the transfer back of production into the original country) of some supply chains as the cost advantages of producing in emerging countries decline. Also significant has been the import of some supply chains into China (the transfer of production processes from other countries) a point brought out in a recent report from the McKinsey Global Institute.

The last significant liberalisations of trade were the completion of the Uruguay Round in 1994 and China’s accession to the World Trade Organisation (WTO) in 2001. Since then, the Doha round of multilateral trade negotiations flopped, Mr Donald Trump withdrew the US from the Trans-Pacific Partnership and negotiation of a Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership between the US and EU has barely got off the ground.

More recently, the world has witnessed a shift towards outright protectionism.

Mr Trump has used a controversial national security argument to justify tariffs on imports of steel and aluminium, including those from the country’s closest allies. These actions violate WTO rules, which define the national security loophole very restrictively.

Most importantly, the US has launched an open-ended trade war on China. The total affected trade already comes to about 7 per cent of US imports. In addition, the US has indicated its desire to upend the WTO’s dispute settlement process and is blocking

appointments to the organisation’s appellate body, with a view to rendering it unable to function.

If the actions taken so far are not hugely damaging, far more so is the ideological rejection of core principles of the global trading system by its founder, the US:

Instead of liberalisation, there is protectionism; instead of multilateralism, unilateralism; instead of global rules, national discretion.

What is not clear is how far this represents a permanent US repudiation of past commitments. But suspicion of Chinese aspirations and a belief that trade has been “unfair” to the US are shared across US politics.

What lies ahead? Much depends on the evolution of domestic politics in high-income countries, especially the US. If allegedly perfidious foreigners continue to be made a scapegoat for failures of domestic policy – always a temptation – an inward-looking economic nationalism might become even more potent.

Alternatively, in a world of resurgent great power politics, we might see protectionist trading blocs emerge around the economic superpowers: the US, the EU and China.

The evolution of economic opportunities will also shape globalisation, as it always has, from the steamships and cables of the 19th century to the container ships and internet of today.

In a seminal book, out early this year, Professor Richard Baldwin of the Graduate Institute in Geneva discusses what he calls “globotics” – an ugly neologism that describes the integration of artificial intelligence with robotics. The author argues that this is about to do to many services what the old information revolution did to manufacturing: facilitate offshoring and destroy enormous numbers of jobs.

The impact will be twofold. First, improvements in technology will make it far easier to collaborate at a distance. People who are not physically present will be able to participate much more fully in collaborative work, principally as a result of improvements in virtual reality. This will promote globalisation.

Second, many tasks now carried out by people will be done by AI and robots, revolutionising many service activities, with profound and highly destabilising economic and social effects.

The development of cross-border economic activities will continue to reflect the interaction between technology and politics.

The former creates opportunities, the latter struggles to manage them. Politics, now, are increasingly inward looking. Yet humanity is discovering new ways of annihilating distance and jumping barriers. In the long run, the latter will probably win and globalisation proceed. But the short run looks very bumpy.

FINANCIAL TIMES

If the actions taken so far are not hugely damaging, far more so is the ideological rejection of core principles of the global trading system by its founder, the US: instead of liberalisation, there is protectionism; instead of multilateralism, unilateralism; instead of global rules, national discretion.



German Chancellor Angela Merkel and French President Emmanuel Macron at the Arc de Triomphe in Paris last November. They will sign a new bilateral treaty tomorrow that will intensify Franco-German cooperation on foreign and security policy. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Elysee 2.0: French-German push for stronger ties

Ulrich A. Sante and Marc Abensour

With the Brexit date drawing closer, news from Europe seems to have darkened into a constant flow of negative images.

Milestone moments like Jan 22, 1963, when then French President Charles de Gaulle and then German Federal Chancellor Konrad Adenauer signed the treaty on French-German cooperation, seem to be a long time in the past.

This treaty, today simply called the Elysee Treaty, set out a fundamentally new course for Franco-German relations, as a lesson drawn from two bloody wars in the first-half of the century.

What for centuries had been regarded as a traditional enmity between the two states was able to develop into reconciliation and Franco-German friendship. The two states at the centre of confrontation in Europe became the engine of European integration.

The 56th anniversary of the Elysee Treaty on Jan 22, 2019 puts the spotlight on the next chapter of this success story, our bond of friendship tomorrow being renewed by “Elysee 2.0”, a new bilateral agreement to join forces even closer.

With tomorrow’s signing of this new ambitious treaty in Aachen, Dr Angela Merkel and Mr Emmanuel Macron make clear that Germany and France want to face the European, foreign, security, social and economic policy challenges ahead together and take our partnership to the next level.

The new bilateral treaty will significantly intensify Franco-German cooperation on foreign and security policy, particularly in the European Union and the United Nations. Both countries have reinforced their military cooperation with the adoption of a mutual defence clause and setting up of a joint unit

for peace operations abroad.

With Germany just having started its 2019-2020 term as non-permanent member of the UN Security Council, and France as a permanent member and chairman of the Group of 7 this year, Singapore, with its strong commitment to multilateralism, a rules-based international order and free trade, will remain a strong partner in our endeavour in the UN and other international fora.

Beyond aiming to help make Europe capable of taking action, the focus of the new Franco-German treaty is best described as “jointly safeguarding the future”.

Pooling our strengths translates into ensuring our countries are well equipped to face future challenges in fields such as digitalisation, education and technology.

These focus areas are also of crucial importance to Asean’s path towards becoming the fourth-largest global economy.

During its Asean chairmanship last year, Singapore has considerably contributed to Asean’s progress in building a resilient and innovative community making use of opportunities arising from the digital revolution.

Just like Europe, Asean needs to pool ideas and resources to tackle complex and unprecedented challenges ahead, with the Asean Smart Cities Network adopted during Singapore’s chairmanship being such a collaborative platform to improve the lives of Asean citizens.

As Asean coordinator for relations with the EU and a strong ally, Singapore, we are hopeful, will play a major role in building up a strategic partnership between the EU and Asean.

In the case of Germany and France, a “Joint Citizen’s Fund” that opens up new opportunities for encounters, digital platforms and media cooperation projects will be established, with the

long-term goal of creating a common cultural and media space and a European public area that can stem the growing tide of populism.

In order to improve our connectivity and people-to-people ties, we will develop cross-border projects focusing on areas such as healthcare, day care for children, schools and vocational training, cross-border job placement services and transnational infrastructure projects, the goal being to jointly develop innovative European solutions contributing to foster European integration.

France and Germany will also increasingly coordinate their economic policies, step up joint efforts to fight climate change and develop strategies to transform their economies. All this will make day-to-day life much easier for our citizens and further deepen cross-border cooperation.

Germany and France firmly believe that closer cooperation need not come at the cost of national sovereignty, but instead makes countries stronger together.

Our countries are pooling their strength and demonstrating their commitment to a strong and sovereign Europe – just to cite one example: 10 among our French and German Cultural Institutes abroad, the Goethe-Institute and the Institut Francais, will be gradually merged by 2020 to underline what unites us.

More and closer cooperation instead of protectionism and withdrawal from international commitments, “Europe United” instead of “me first”.

Our bilateral cooperation is designed to advance the European project and not meant to exclude others. Thus, the new French-German Treaty signed tomorrow in Aachen can serve as a nucleus for European cooperation.

• Ulrich A. Sante is the German Ambassador to Singapore while Marc Abensour is the French Ambassador to Singapore.

Silicon Valley’s grand job experiment with people as guinea pigs

Katherine Boyle

For roughly 2,300 years, Aristotle’s edict, “We work in order that we may have leisure”, has explained a lot of why humans do what they do.

Philosophers in every age have upheld the virtue of work, providing that, at some point, we could kick back a little bit. But Silicon Valley is busy fiddling with that ancient contract.

Among technologists building our task-based gig economy, there have emerged two factions holding opposing theories of the future of work and what it means. In one, we each will need to have many jobs. In the other, we will not work at all.

It’s unclear in which direction we’re headed. The first group – the UBEReans, let’s call them – believe the gig economy will give workers more money, more time and more flexibility.

In a perfect UBERian world, we will all be gig workers, working for a variety of platforms, enjoying the benefits of life as independent contractors.

As Uber and Lyft – the current

victors of the gig economy – go public this year, it’s also clear that Silicon Valley’s grand experiment with gig employment is not so much freedom from labour, but gamifying it so that workers will do more of it.

The next time you climb into the Prius you just summoned, ask your driver if he or she is on track to hit their Quest bonus today and see what happens.

The second group – the UBLans, let’s call them – believe machine intelligence will soon replace much of work as we know it.

The UBLan mantra is: “We work on algorithms in order that... oh no, humans may never need to work again.”

As human labour increasingly becomes the most expensive input in the “technical stack”, this faction believes much of work will become obsolete and the government will need to give everyone some form of Universal Basic Income (UBI) – to live.

Universal Basic Income has become intellectually so trendy in Silicon Valley that it’s a little like last season’s Juicero – faddish and frivolously accepted as something society really needs.

Universal Basic Income has become intellectually so trendy in Silicon Valley that it’s a little like last season’s Juicero – faddish and frivolously accepted as something society really needs. When UBLans gather in their cryptocurrency WhatsApp groups, they’ll cite the success of UBI in Kenya and Uganda, where GiveDirectly, a non-profit, offers unconditional cash to small groups.

When UBLans gather in their cryptocurrency WhatsApp groups – UBLans aren’t fans of dinner parties as they tend to fast “to enhance cognitive function” during the week – they’ll cite the success of UBI in Kenya and Uganda, where GiveDirectly, a non-profit, offers unconditional cash to small groups. Or the Alaska Permanent Fund, which has been supplying Alaskans with a yearly cash dividend since 1982.

“On a limited scope,” they’ll say, “this works!”

As everyone knows, when Silicon Valley investors assess start-ups, their primary question is, “Will it scale?”

When it comes to solving the riddle of an economy where work is dramatically changing, many who work with me in the digital economy are eager to foist the problem on Washington.

Perhaps they know full well that the gridlocked Congress will not enact the greatest change to welfare since the New Deal.

For many technologists, UBI is an intellectual get-out-of-jail-free card that makes it easier to stomach the long-term effects of their preferred business models.

On the flip side, many advocates for the gig economy genuinely believe their new business model is better for workers’ lives.

And for many workers, it is: Uber and Lyft and many of their like are strong platforms for part-time workers who make gig work a supplement to a full-time job.

But the reality of who benefits seems to relate directly to the type of gig work one does and how much of it one performs: According to a JPMorgan Chase & Co Institute study, from 2013 to 2017, gig-worker earnings fell by 53 per cent in the transportation sector but grew by 69 per cent in the leasing sector.

Thus, if you’re driving, you’re likely worse off than you were five years ago. But if you’re renting an

apartment, you’re faring much better.

Meanwhile, it’s somewhat unclear how many people the gig economy really serves.

US government agencies can’t even agree on “who” a gig worker is: The Bureau of Labour Statistics recently declared a slight decline over 12 years in gig-economy workers to 10 per cent of the workforce, while the Federal Reserve says contractors comprise closer to 30 per cent, the difference being whether gig work is primary or supplemental income, which again, isn’t easy to measure.

Even professors Alan Krueger and Lawrence Katz, the two economists who published a widely cited study in 2016 on the gig economy, recently walked back their conclusions that the gig economy was growing rapidly.

Growing or not, it’s clear, though, that politicians are not keen to fund the social costs of these new business models; more likely, they will force tech companies to unravel the problems themselves.

Last month, New York officials enacted a guaranteed minimum wage for ride-sharing drivers of US\$17.22 (\$\$23) per hour.

Neither the UBERians nor the UBLans applauded. That may be because it’s increasingly clear what most people want: a traditional relationship with their employer.

Silicon Valley would be wise to heed the signs – as well as the literal signage – now popping up on streets. Last year, when striking workers picketed outside many Marriott hotels in San Francisco, they held up signs that said, “One job should be enough”.

While the future may mean choosing no job or many, many of us are still with Aristotle, craving that weekend nap. WASHINGTON POST

• Katherine Boyle is a venture capitalist at General Catalyst in San Francisco.

China built a big, beautiful wall, too – it failed

Michael Schuman

From the moment he launched his campaign for president, Mr Donald Trump has compared the barrier he wanted to build along the US southern border to China’s Great Wall.

With the US government now shuttered by the standoff over funding Mr Trump’s wall, both he and his Democratic opponents might want to take a closer look at the Chinese fortification – and why exactly it failed.

The Great Wall visited by tourists today is the handiwork of the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) and was primarily constructed in the mid-to-late 16th century.

The common perception is that the wall was conceived as a single, massive infrastructure project to protect China’s tumultuous northern border from foreign invaders. Not quite.

(The Great Wall predated the Ming, spanned dynasties and is made up of a series of fortifications collectively known as changcheng. Much of the earlier stretches of the wall have fallen into ruin.)

In the case of the Ming’s wall, it was built to a great degree by default, by a political system too paralysed by infighting to come up with anything better.

Border security had been a preoccupation of China’s imperial court from its earliest days. “Barbarians” from the northern steppe – whether Xiongnu, Turk, Jurchen, Mongol or others – routinely threatened the Middle Kingdom. Some, such as Genghis Khan’s Mongols in the 13th century, managed to overrun the entire empire.

The long northern boundary ran through inhospitable terrain that made it difficult to defend.

Chinese emperors had tried a variety of methods to secure the border, from buying off the barbarians to mounting massive military expeditions against them. The problem would always return when a new batch of tribesmen appeared across the frontier.

The Ming Dynasty compounded the usual difficulties of securing the border with a combination of



The Great Wall visited by tourists today is the handiwork of the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644). It was built to a great degree by default, by a political system too paralysed by infighting to come up with anything better. PHOTO: CTC TRAVEL

arrogance, division and indecision.

The Ming court was an especially raucous place where hostile factions were almost constantly at each other’s throats. The border issue often got dragged into these contests for palace power.

Generally, the Ming, having reclaimed the empire from Genghis Khan’s descendants, leaned towards a tough line against their northern neighbours, often denying them the chance to trade with China. The Mongols depended on such trade for supplies they needed to survive on the inhospitable steppe. So they were left with little choice but to launch raids into China to plunder what they needed. The attacks both hardened opinion in China against the Mongol tribes and heightened the urgency for more border security.

The fractured Ming court groped for a solution. Some officials advocated a more diplomatic approach that would restore trade and alleviate the pressure on the Mongols to raid. They were usually shouted down by more hawkish mandarins who thought such policies smacked of appeasement.

The latter argued that Mongol requests for trade relations were just a ploy by the untrustworthy barbarians to lull the Chinese into a vulnerable complacency. These hawks often favoured military

action to push the raiders away from the border. But, sending troops into the northern wastes to chase nomadic horsemen was costly, difficult to organise and widely unpopular.

Proposals often got entangled in the arcane, personal intrigues between palace notables jockeying for imperial favour. That seemed to leave the court with one option: building defensive barriers to keep the barbarians out.

“Unwilling to trade with the Mongols, and unable to defeat them militarily, by the middle of the 16th century the Ming had no policy choice left but... to attempt to exclude the nomads by building walls,” historian Arthur Waldron wrote in his study *The Great Wall Of China: From History To Myth*.

The strategy proved effective in blunting Mongol raids – where walls were built.

The problem was that the mobile horsemen could easily shift their assaults to undefended areas of the border. That’s exactly what a large Mongol force did in 1550 when it penetrated to the Beijing suburbs.

The response of the court was to build more walls. The Great Wall was the result of this haphazard defence policy.

The tragedy is that the Ming’s big, beautiful wall failed to fulfil its sole mission: to protect China from invasion. The Ming were still

tinkering with the huge structure when the dynasty fell in 1644.

Amid the resulting chaos, a new steppe power, the Manchus, descended from the north, snatched Beijing and ruled as the Qing Dynasty.

Maybe the Manchu conquest was beyond repulse. A China divided was bound to fall.

But, the Ming clearly contributed to their own catastrophe. A court environment that prioritises defeating one’s internal rivals over cooperating on policy stymied any hope of developing an effective solution to a serious problem.

Emperors, coddled in luxurious palaces and lacking any real knowledge of conditions along the border, preferred looking tough on foreigners to compromise.

Resistance to mutually beneficial trade deepened the causes of instability along the border.

Treating those others across the frontier solely as bandits to be thwarted doomed Ming policy to failure.

Sounds familiar? The ultimate lesson of the Great Wall of China is that a physical barrier, no matter how expensive and impressive, will fail if detached from a broader set of policies to alleviate the sources of insecurity along the border. The Ming never figured that out.

Hopefully Washington’s mandarins will. BLOOMBERG

If Google and LG like smart television, so should privacy police

Alex Webb

The world’s tech police have the opportunity to succeed in television where they initially failed with the rest of the connected world, and ensure that users retain a firm grasp on their data.

Smart television is nothing new. Nor is the shift in the platform wars, where tech firms duke it out for primacy of their operating systems, from smartphones to the television set.

But the fact that Amazon.com is developing its own smart TV indicates that there’s enough value in the user data to offset the hardware’s otherwise feeble profitability – and that regulators should be quick to respond.

As ever, Germany’s Federal Cartel Office leads the way. It started an inquiry into smart TVs in 2017, and the first findings will likely be presented this year.

But while Europe’s General Data Protection Regulation might assuage some concerns, very few other nations are on top of the issue. Consumers are mindlessly sacrificing reams of personal information and regulators are doing little to prevent it.

The timing has become urgent. The electronics industry’s annual bacchanal in Las Vegas has heralded many a false dawn when it comes to new technology (the Nokia N-Gage, anyone?), but last week’s edition set the scene for an industry shift to intensify.

New alliances were forged in smart TVs: Apple said the iTunes Store would be available on television sets made by Samsung Electronics, while its Smartphone nemesis, LG Electronics, said its new devices would support both Alphabet’s Google Assistant and Amazon.com’s Alexa.

For regulators, the concerns focus on what are known as addressable ads. That’s where the same TV show carries different promotions for different audiences or demographics, above and beyond the segmentation of viewers that regional TV stations have long practised.

In 2016, addressable commercials accounted for just 5 per cent of all ads, according to the World Advertising Research Centre. By 2022, that will jump to

32 per cent. Television-makers sense an opportunity to boost their otherwise pitiful margins, and keep making money long after they have sold the initial device through selling content, apps and, most pertinently, ad space on welcome screens and channel guides. And those targeted ads inevitably rely on user data.

The appeal lies in tying the huge viewership that television continues to enjoy with the granular targeting of programmatic advertising, according to Mr Mike Caprio, chief growth officer at adtech firm Sizmek. “If you can do both, then you’ll win.”

It’s the holy grail that helps explain why Facebook and others are accelerating into video content.

Smart TVs are vying for leadership.

Take a new television set. Many include automatic content recognition technology, which can monitor the shows you watch in order to ascertain viewing habits. Each HDMI port has a unique identifier, and users might unwittingly consent for the manufacturer to log what devices are plugged in – the presence of a Sony PlayStation, satellite box and Apple TV could demonstrate a sizeable household income. That data could be linked to your mobile browsing habits if you pair your smartphone to your set via Bluetooth.

If users aren’t fully aware of these risks, then regulators need to make it harder for firms to harvest all that data.

As things stand, there’s very little stopping them.

Traditional TV manufacturers, cognisant of how handset makers’ adoption of Android helped Google become a dominant player in ads, have so far largely stuck with their own operating systems. That’s likely why Amazon is building its own set, to bypass those hardware gatekeepers.

But that also means they should attract the same scrutiny over privacy to which Silicon Valley has become accustomed.

As smart TV adoption reaches an inflection point, regulators need to get their act together quickly, and follow the German lead by finding an appropriate set of rules to stem the unwitting torrent of user data. BLOOMBERG

BIG PICTURE



WEATHER

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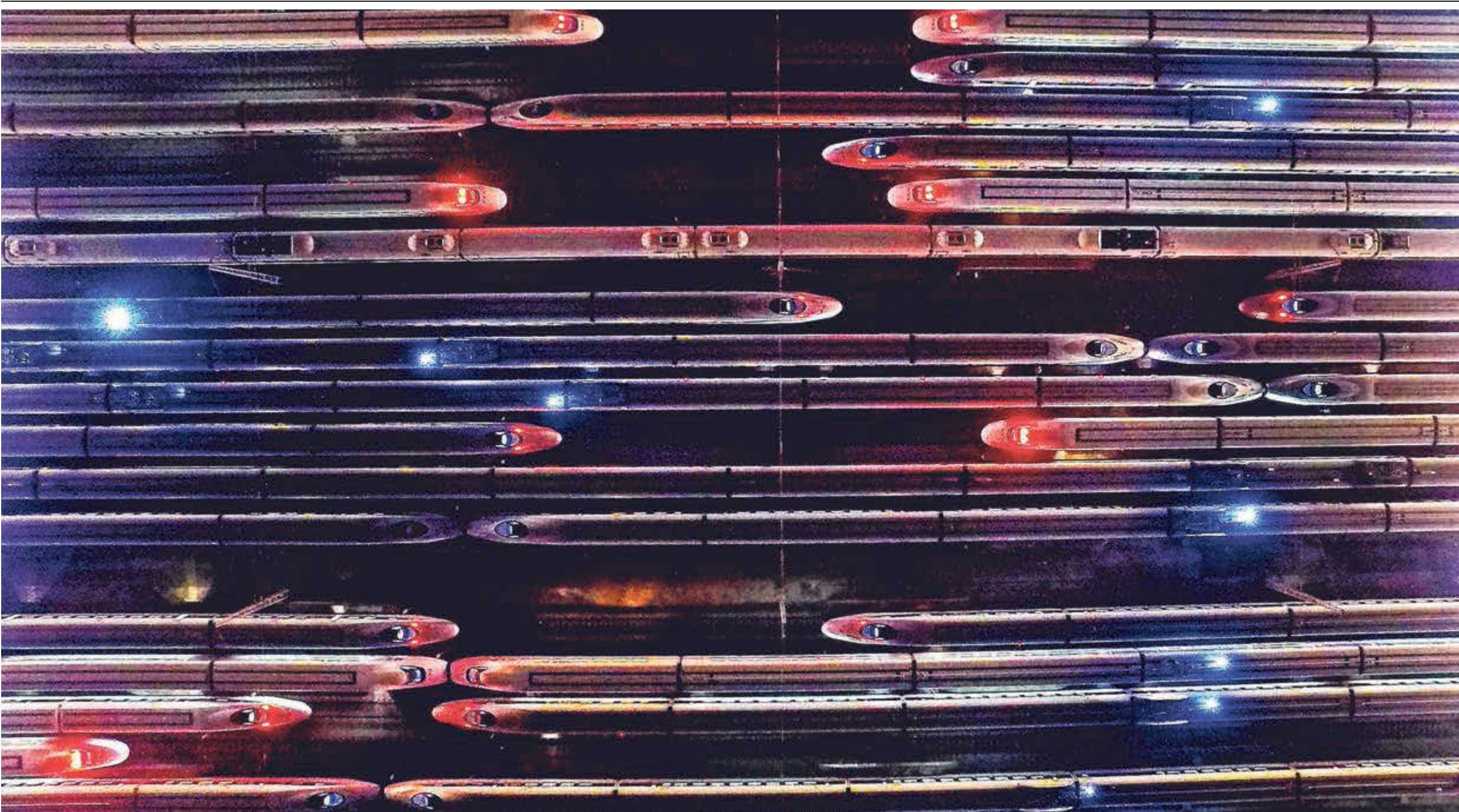


PHOTO: XINHUA

On track for CNY rush

This top view of a railway line in Nanchang, in China's south-eastern Jiangxi province, shows a fleet of high-speed trains ready to be put into service.
China Railway is expecting to handle over 400 million passengers

for the upcoming Chinese New Year. As the festivities approach, millions of people working or studying out of their home towns will be rushing home to reunite with their families.
The travel rush is expected to

start today, about two weeks before Chinese New Year, and will last till March 1.
In anticipation of this mass exodus, several new high-speed trains were unveiled in Beijing last month, reported Xinhua.



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C1

BUSINESS

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ESR-REIT'S Q4 GROSS REVENUE, MORE THAN DOUBLE THE SAME PERIOD A YEAR AGO C3

Nurturing the entrepreneurial spirit

Universities here offering more modules as demand soars for entrepreneur-related courses

Sue-Ann Tan

Plan A used to revolve around landing a secure job in a big company, but more young people are now keener on entrepreneurship, with some even taking the plunge to start their own businesses as soon as they leave school.

Universities have responded to the trend by introducing more courses for budding entrepreneurs, with the latest unveiled earlier this month.

Singapore Management University (SMU) announced the launch of a new social entrepreneurship programme to help pre-university students become future social innovators.

This builds on the school's move in 2016 to set up an entrepreneurship major with modules that teach students about developing low-cost, quick consumer experiments, global entrepreneurship opportunities and the relationship between play and invention.

While the major started with only two students, this number grew to 23 in 2017 and 32 last year.

The National University of Singapore (NUS) Business School added a new specialisation in innovation and entrepreneurship for undergraduates in 2017. In addition, over the last 10 years, more than 370 companies have been set up by alumni from the NUS Overseas Colleges programme, and many were established while they were still at NUS.

Dr Lily Chan, chief executive of NUS Enterprise, said: "There is an uptrend in students proactively seeking out entrepreneurship-related learning opportunities, such as at entrepreneurship events like our Kopi Chats and workshops, industry-specific accelerator programmes and challenges."

The Kopi Chats are a series of talks for the start-up community, organised by NUS Enterprise.

Nanyang Technological University has also introduced tie-ups with companies to help students be more innovative in tackling real-world business challenges. Some of these collaborations involve companies like supply chain solutions firm YCH and Singapore Airlines.

Mr Hau Koh Foo, director of SMU's Institute of Innovation and Entrepreneurship, said more young people are able to become entrepreneurs because of the increased support through grants and programmes. He said: "The Startup SG grant, for example, (through Enterprise Singapore) provides first-time founders up to \$30,000 to work on their ideas."

"In addition, Enterprise Singapore supports the creation of an entrepreneurial ecosystem of incubators and accelerators that help founders with financing, knowledge and network. This creates a strong support structure that promotes start-up success, making it easier for one to be an entrepreneur."

Another factor driving would-be entrepreneurs is the wealth of publicity founders of local and international start-ups attract.

"Students are emboldened with the confidence that they could be the next success stories," said Mr Hau. "Also, the general acceptance that start-up failures are beneficial for growth has made the fear of failure less of an impediment for students."

Events celebrating young entrepreneurs also help to cast a shine around such career choices.

Last month, the Young South-east Asian Leaders Initiative Summit was held here, attracting 120 people from the region, including eight Singaporeans, with leadership or entrepreneurship capabilities.

More importantly, the mindset that working in a big company is better has shifted, as graduates start to see start-ups as a way to rise through the ranks.

Mr Hau said: "Due to a relatively flat hierarchy and limited resources at the beginning, start-up employees or founders typically end up learning and doing everything that needs to be done to grow a business."

"Corporations are starting to appreciate and hire people who have had start-up experience. This general understanding helps to encourage students to start their own businesses as a way to accelerate their growth and careers."

Dr Chan from NUS added: "There is a shift in the mindset amongst youth, with a greater willingness to take risks and pursue causes they believe in. Entrepreneurship as a career path or goal is also slowly gaining acceptance amongst the young, their contemporaries and parents."

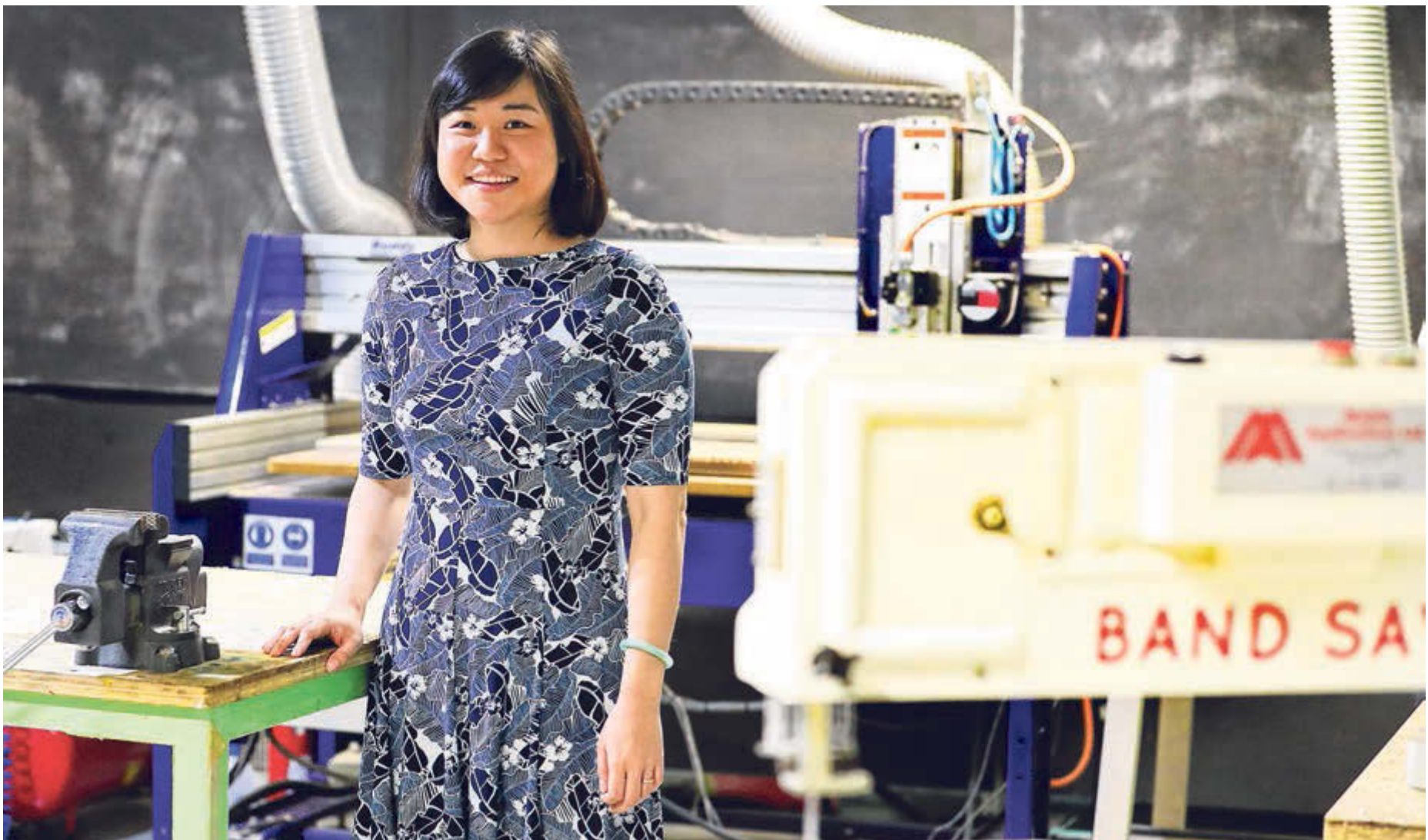
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IN DEMAND

Corporations are starting to appreciate and hire people who have had start-up experience. This general understanding helps to encourage students to start their own businesses as a way to accelerate their growth and careers.



MR HAU KOH FOO, director of SMU's Institute of Innovation and Entrepreneurship, on the changing mindset of big companies.



Ms Lee Pin Qi, chief operating officer and co-founder of Maker Ed Asia, works with schools and teachers to incorporate new programmes and approaches in education. She said that in pursuing her social goals, she also has to earn an income. But satisfaction for her comes from the effect on society and not just the money earned. ST PHOTO: JONATHAN CHOO

Entrepreneur balances risks and consequences

Entrepreneur Lee Pin Qi already had three start-ups under her belt by the age of 29 – a striking testament to her willingness to take risks and live with the consequences.

Ms Lee was one of eight Singaporeans who made their mark at the Young South-east Asian Leaders Initiative Summit held last month to bring together young peo-

ple in the region with leadership and entrepreneurial capabilities.

The event, which started in 2013, is the United States government's signature programme to strengthen leadership development and networking in the region.

Ms Lee told The Straits Times: "A growth mindset, the belief that I can learn to do anything (new), was something that I recognised I had. It gave me the confidence to venture into something different, yet still is aligned with my goals."

"In general, I am also willing to undertake as much risk as I can bear the consequences for."

While she was still at university, Ms Lee started Salt Solution in 2012, a for-profit social enterprise that conducted service learning training for volunteers and volunteer leaders. That led to her second start-up, Etch Empathy, in 2014, which conducts programmes that help people

empathise with others. Salt Solution was dissolved about three years ago to focus on her new start-up.

Ms Lee is also the chief operating officer and co-founder of her third venture, Maker Ed Asia, which works with schools and teachers to incorporate new programmes and approaches in education. The firm also developed maker spaces in primary and secondary schools, which are collaborative work-spaces for learning and exploration.

Ms Lee has had to pursue her social goal while also earning an income. "Our social cause is quality education, and we serve a need in schools to provide quality solutions to our partners," she said.

"Hence, we are proud to charge a reasonable sum for our services."

"Some customers may need a little reminder of the fact that we are just like any businesses that have bills to pay, but they are reasonable

partners who would understand immediately when explained. When I first started my entrepreneurship journey, a wise social entrepreneur told me, 'Without money, all you have is good intentions'."

"This serves as a reminder from time to time, both to ensure I keep focus on my good intentions, and to remember to earn a decent keep."

Ms Lee is aware that such social enterprises still have to meet the bottom line, but in the end, satisfaction comes from the effect on society and not just the money earned.

"One of the things that has brought me the most satisfaction is when teachers, or my clients, tell me that the students remember my programmes at the end of the year. Making purposeful programmes that are fun and memorable is something I take pride in."

Sue-Ann Tan

If at first you don't succeed, learn from it and try again

Going from the army to starting your own business is a drastic career switch but it was one Mr Joe Tan was daring enough to make.

Mr Tan, 35, served in the military for 11 years and rose to the rank of captain. But he shed the uniform four years ago to enter the corporate world.

That career switch landed him at the Young South-east Asian Leaders Initiative Summit last month alongside other entrepreneurs.

He said: "I started off wanting to take a break from work, so I decided to start something that I like. That thing turned out to be Love Action Project, which runs social events that will impact society positively."

Mr Tan is the co-founder and director of the business, which started as a pro-bono enterprise before becoming a for-profit social business in 2014. "It struck me one day that running the project could be (financially) sustainable, when a corporate came to me to ask if they could pay me to engage me to manage their corporate social responsibility (CSR) event," he said.

However, the early days of being an entrepreneur were not easy and Mr Tan found himself taking on side jobs. "The profit was not stable. I started working on the side as a copywriter helping businesses with their business proposals. I even did copywriting for commercial adver-

tisements and scripts."

These stints were good learning experiences, he added.

In 2017, he ventured into food and beverage and is now the director of The Tuckshop - Assembly, a community bar near the Geylang Canal. The space aims to be a meeting point for locals and expatriates to engage over craft beer and food. Last year, Mr Tan also became the chief executive of Highlight Media International, the commercial event arm of Love Action Project.

Looking back, he said one of the most important things he learnt was to embrace failure.

"In my early days, I made over 15 pitches to various organisations and all of them loved my idea but none of them wanted to fund me," he said.

"I still remember that when there was finally one organisation who wanted to fund me, the amount they offered was \$500. It was disheartening but, as I persevered, I finally got support from an organisation who gave me an opportunity to conduct their CSR event and from there, everything just took off."

"You have to accept failure, and embrace it as a learning lesson. Don't be afraid to change, evolve and you must persevere."

Sue-Ann Tan

SEE BUSINESS C2

Mr Joe Tan's early days as an entrepreneur were not easy and he found himself taking on side jobs. Looking back, he said one of the most important things he learnt was to embrace failure. One must evolve and persevere and not be afraid to change, he said. ST PHOTO: JASMINE CHOONG



Commentary

Growing sense of urgency for social, environmental, governance changes

Many issues are long-term but some pose a more immediate threat than investors realise

Jessica Ground

For The Straits Times

Sustainability experts usually avoid having to pen market outlook pieces – it’s all about the long term, after all.

But our thesis at Schroders is that environmental and social change is accelerating, generating an ever-stronger headwind for companies to navigate.

Last year provided ample evidence of this, with populism continuing to rise alongside global temperatures.

Increasingly, there is nowhere to hide for firms that don’t operate in a sustainable way. Technology companies, which in the past seemed almost untouchable, have seen more taxation, regulation and a number of uncomfortable moments in front of the US Congress.

Against this backdrop, environmental, social and governance (ESG) analysis and forecasting have never been more important for investors. This is one of Schroders’ inescapable

investment truths for the decade ahead.

ENVIRONMENTAL: THE PHYSICAL RISK OF CLIMATE CHANGE

Surely climate change is the ultimate long-term issue, most of you will be thinking. So much of the analysis in this area is about far-off risks and talk about action that needs to take place by 2030 – a lifetime for markets.

However, one aspect of climate change is here and now: As temperatures climb, so the physical losses from extreme weather events are expected to do so too. This could be especially pertinent this year, given that experts expect an El Nino pattern to develop, causing warmer temperatures and increasing the possibility of severe weather around the world.

Investors often neglect to thoroughly understand just how vulnerable a company’s physical assets and infrastructure are to severe disruption and damage as a direct result of drastic weather patterns.

Recognising this, we created a physical risk framework which we applied to over 10,000 companies

globally. It calculates the amount of insurance businesses would have to pay to protect their physical assets against weather-related hazards.

We identified oil and gas, utilities and basic resources as the sectors most exposed to the physical impact of climate change. The potential cost of insuring their physical assets equates to more than 3 per cent of their market values.

The sectors least at risk are technology, personal and household goods and healthcare.

There is growing evidence that climate change is exacerbating natural weather systems and that, going forward, we are likely to see harsh weather materialise more frequently. This doesn’t just apply to 2019 and its possible El Nino event, but to future years as well. This may have important investment implications.

SOCIAL: CORPORATES TO BEAR THE BRUNT OF THE YOUTH CHALLENGE

Many think that the “S” in ESG is the most difficult part of the acronym to analyse. Yet it is the area in which we have had the most success: we forecasted the growth of living wages in 2014, the advent of sugar taxes in 2015, and the impact of rising protectionism on global supply chains in 2016. So we would like to think our track record on social predictions is pretty

We identified oil and gas, utilities and basic resources as the sectors most exposed to the physical impact of climate change. The potential cost of insuring their physical assets equates to more than 3 per cent of their market values. The sectors least at risk are technology, personal and household goods and healthcare.

compelling, which makes the bar high.

One major challenge that we see looming is inter-generational inequality. Developed world populations are getting older, and this is becoming expensive.

Related costs like healthcare and pensions are rising almost exponentially. Asset price inflation and low rates have created “generation rent” (so called because of the difficulties many young people face in becoming homeowners).

However, given that younger generations have historically largely abstained from voting, policymakers haven’t always grappled with these issues. Recent elections have pointed to a reverse in this trend and, as a result, we expect to see increasing pressure on governments to act.

Given the current state of many governments’ finances, providing solutions for younger voters will be a challenge. We can expect companies to have to shoulder more of the burden, which will likely mean higher pension contributions, more support of housing for younger workers and greater training demands.

We continue to think that companies and consumers face rising taxes on many fronts. For example, carbon taxes continue to increase, although not at the rate we believe is effective enough to really combat climate change.

It doesn’t feel as if the world is quite going to be ready for meat taxes this year, but given the benefits for health and the environment, we wouldn’t rule it out over the medium term.

GOVERNANCE: DEBT COULD COME BACK TO HAUNT US

We were somewhat surprised last year when we looked at debt data to find that the share prices of

companies with relatively high levels of debt hadn’t been penalised.

The credit and economic cycle has been running for quite some time. This means that few of the cohort of managers and boards can remember what a bind high levels of borrowing can be when the interest rate or operating environment changes.

Research from Bernstein (Oct 24, 2018) paints a rosy picture of companies’ debt positions. It shows that fewer and fewer companies are struggling to service their debt because their operating income comfortably covers their interest expenses.

However, the next three years will see 25 per cent to 45 per cent of this debt rolling over (that is, when existing borrowing arrangements mature and need to be renewed). Against a backdrop of rising interest rates, this could be a challenge.

Yes, more debt is long-term than before but, for some companies, rates don’t have to rise much and operations don’t have to decline a great deal for things to become markedly tougher.

A GROWING SENSE OF URGENCY

While many of the issues we have raised here are long-term in nature, a number of them pose a more immediate threat to companies than most investors appreciate.

Rapid and large-scale environmental and social change is likely to see companies across the board come under increasing pressure from a variety of sources, whether environmental-, social- or governance-related.

In the light of this, we think ESG analysis and forecasting will continue to rise in importance for investors the world over.

• The writer is global head of stewardship - ESG at Schroders.

Happy mix of business and community work

Sue-Ann Tan

While most businesses think of the bottom line, keen innovator Veerappan Swaminathan decided that money and sustainability could go hand in hand.

Mr Veerappan, 33, is the co-founder and director of Sustainable Living Lab, a consulting firm that aims to help other companies and organisations engage in sustainable growth through programmes and technology.

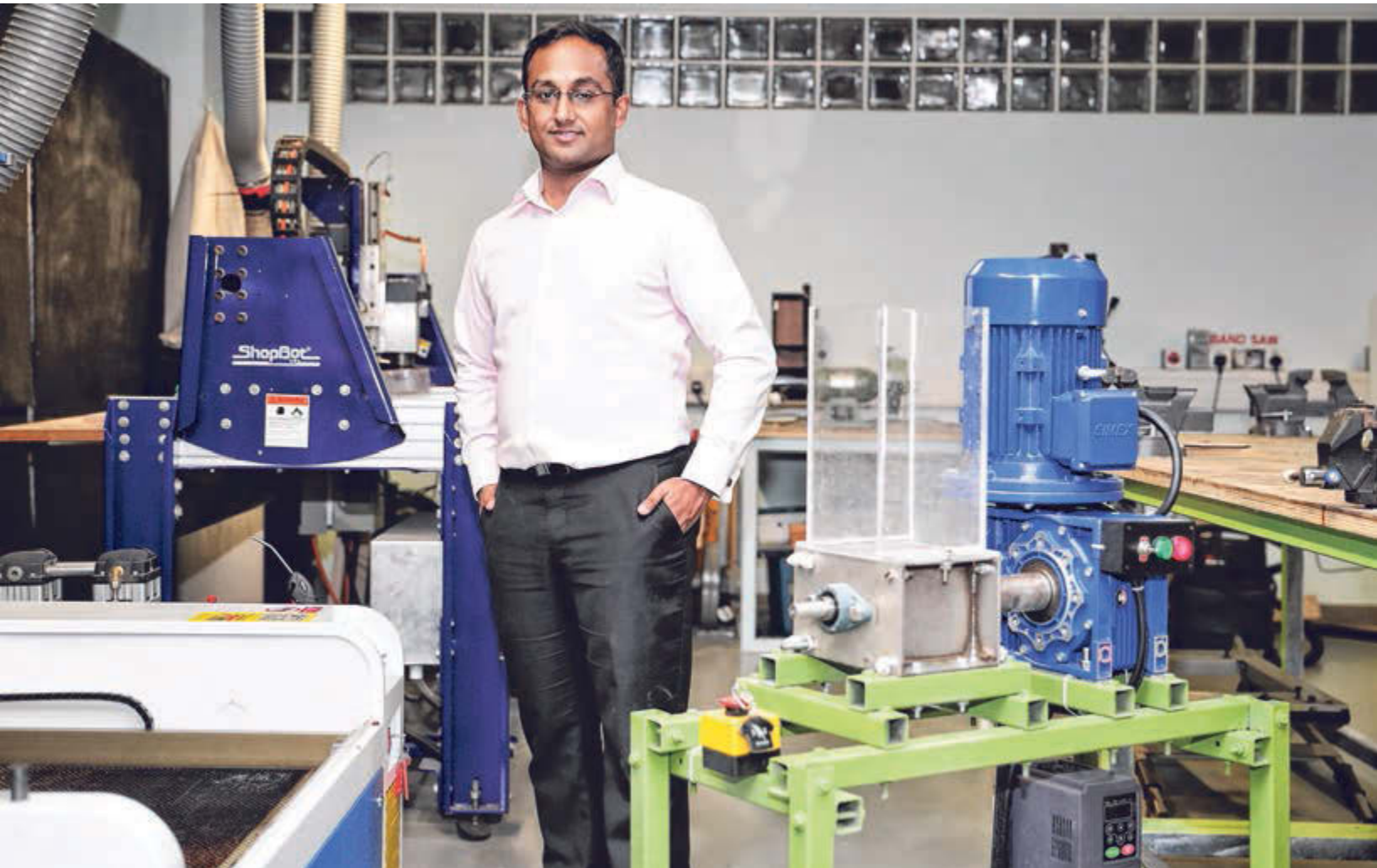
The firm provides service innovation and community engagement programmes. It also looks into disruptive technologies, such as machine learning and the Internet of Things, sustainable innovation models and community thinking.

His work led Mr Veerappan to be among the Singaporeans invited to the Young South-east Asian Leaders Initiative Summit last month.

It was really just about being willing to try things out that got him there, he said. “One does not learn to be an entrepreneur. You have to try things and put yourself out there. If you’re slightly older, get involved in sales. Selling anything will offer a good education in the art of persuasion.”

Mr Veerappan founded the firm in 2011 with two friends right after he graduated from the National University of Singapore, having studied mechanical engineering.

During his undergraduate years,



Mr Veerappan Swaminathan founded Sustainable Living Lab in 2011 with two friends after he graduated from the National University of Singapore, having studied mechanical engineering. He finds satisfaction in seeing change in the habits of those who have participated in his firm’s programmes. ST PHOTO: KEVIN LIM

A WILLINGNESS TO TRY

One does not learn to be an entrepreneur. You have to try things and put yourself out there. If you’re slightly older, get involved in sales. Selling anything will offer a good education in the art of persuasion.



MR VEERAPPAN SWAMINATHAN, co-founder and director of Sustainable Living Lab, a consulting firm that aims to help other companies and organisations engage in sustainable growth through programmes and technology.

he took part in 11 innovation competitions. He won seven and used the prize money to set up the company.

It is not that unusual to do business and also try to benefit the community, he noted.

“The key is not to think about it in a dichotomous fashion. We spent

time to set up a system in which benefiting society and achieving financial profit could go hand in hand.

“For example, our community programmes serve as a way for us to attract and develop talent.”

In 2014, it started an initiative called Repair Kopitiam to tackle the

buy-and-throw-away culture by teaching people the skills needed to repair electrical appliances.

“The Repair Kopitiam programme is something we’ve been very proud of because of how it combined social inclusion with e-waste reduction and skills training,” he

said. Ultimately, inspiring others is what makes him the most satisfied: “Seeing the change in habits of those who participate in our community programmes and our clients also brings me great joy.”

suetan@sph.com.sg

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Democratic House Speaker Nancy Pelosi holding a news conference in Washington this month. The US' partial government shutdown has extended into a fifth week and remains at an impasse. Mrs Pelosi plans to have the House vote on its own border security plan, which she said will not offer new funding for the border wall that President Donald Trump wants but may help reopen negotiations on his demands. PHOTO: EPA-EFE



MarketsInsights

Data, trade war news to continue driving markets

China's GDP figures, CPI data of HK and S'pore among highlights

Leila Lai

Economic data will be the focus for Asian investors this week, with highlights including China's gross domestic product (GDP) figures and last month's consumer price index (CPI) numbers from Hong Kong and Singapore.

China's GDP figures for the last three months of last year to be released today are expected to confirm indications from recent trade data that its economy is slowing.

IG market strategist Pan Jingyi said the data will likely meet the current consensus for a 6.4 per cent year-on-year rise, slowing slightly from 6.5 per cent in the third quarter. That is, unless the industrial production and retail sales data also due today disappoint, which would add to downside risks, she said.

Hong Kong releases its December CPI numbers tomorrow, followed by Singapore on Wednesday. Japan will unveil its inflation figures for this month on Friday.

FXTM research analyst Lukman Otunuga said: "As Asia looks to domestic consumption to offset weaker global demand, inflationary pressures may weaken local consumer sentiment."

A few central banks are scheduled to announce monetary policy decisions this week, including the Bank of Japan on Wednesday and the European Central Bank (ECB) and Bank Negara Malaysia, both on Thursday. None of the monetary policy committees is expected to issue changes, Ms Pan and Mr Otunuga said.

But Mr Otunuga said investors will scrutinise the ECB press conference for "insight into the health of the European Union economy and clues on monetary policy".

United States stock markets are closed today for Martin Luther King Jr Day. The country's partial government shutdown has extended into a fifth week and remains at an impasse, even as President Donald Trump presented his latest proposal for ending it in a televised address to the nation last Saturday.

In exchange for the US\$5.7 billion (\$\$7.7 billion) he wants for a border wall, Mr Trump offered concessions such as three-year extensions to protections including temporary protected status (TPS) under the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) policy for people brought to the US illegally as children.

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell said he would have the Republican-controlled Senate vote on the plan this week, but Democratic leaders indicated that they would reject it.

"It was the President who single-

handedly took away DACA and TPS protections in the first place," said Senate Democratic Leader Chuck Schumer. "Offering some protections back in exchange for the wall is not a compromise but more hostage-taking."

Democratic Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi plans to have the House vote on its own border security plan instead, which she said will not offer new funding for the border wall but may help reopen negotiations on Mr Trump's demands.

On the US-China trade war front, it comes as no surprise that news from the ongoing negotiations is expected to continue driving markets for the rest of this month, with the key event being an end-of-month meeting in Washington.

News that drove markets last Friday included a Bloomberg report that China had offered to raise goods imports from the US by over US\$1 trillion over the next six years to cut its trade surplus to zero by 2024. US stocks extended gains and the US dollar rose following the news.

The report added that US negotiators were sceptical and asked that the imbalance be rectified within two years instead. But economists are doubtful that it is even possible to completely eliminate the trade gap, as it is largely sustained by US demand for Chinese products.

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ESR-Reit focusing on S'pore after merger

ESR-Reit, now one of the largest industrial Reits here with \$3 billion in property value after a merger, is not rushing into overseas markets just yet.

The Reit already has its hands full with its 57 existing assets in Singapore – up to seven have been identified for asset enhancement initiatives over the next three years, and it might accelerate those plans if market demand calls for it.

"This is the beauty of having a large portfolio... Some of our assets are pretty old, we need to rejuvenate them, and now we have the platform to do it," said Mr Adrian Chui, chief executive of the Reit's manager.

Some examples: The Reit is in

talks with a potential tenant to build additional space for them at 7000 Ang Mo Kio 5 where there is currently 495,000 square feet of untapped gross floor area; at 3 Tuas South Avenue 4, there are discussions with some parties who may want to do an expansion there.

Asked about plans for asset acquisitions, Mr Chui said there is no target AUM (assets under management) mandated by sponsor ESR to hit in the next few years.

As for an overseas play, this will happen eventually, but it has to be in countries where the sponsor already has full-fledged operations, including marketing, leasing and project management.

Mr Chui was speaking at ESR-Reit's results briefing for the fourth quarter ended Dec 31, 2018 – the first set of financial results after it completed its merger with Viva Industrial Trust (VIT).

ESR-Reit posted a distribution per unit (DPU) of 1.005 cents, up 8.2 per cent year on year. Gross revenue for the quarter more than doubled from \$27.2 million to \$58.4 million, while net property income (NPI) rose from \$19.9 million to \$42.3 million. The total amount available for distribution to unit holders came to \$29.3 million, up from \$12.2 million a year ago.

For the full year, gross revenue increased 43 per cent to \$156.9 million

while NPI rose nearly 43 per cent to \$112 million, partly due to contributions from the 8 Tuas South Lane and 7000 Ang Mo Kio Avenue 5 properties that were acquired in December 2017. The DPU for the full year worked out to 3.857 cents, compared with 3.853 cents a year ago.

VIT's revenue and expenses from Oct 16, 2018, to Dec 31, 2018, have been included in the group's results. The merger was completed on Oct 15.

The Reit sees demand coming from logistics, warehouses and high-level manufacturing, and it also sees interest from pharmaceutical companies looking to set up shop in Singapore.

The DPU will be paid out on Feb 28. An advance distribution of 0.164 cent per unit was paid on Nov 26 last year. ESR-Reit closed at 53.5 cents on Friday, up 0.94 per cent.

OnTheMove

Knight Frank

Knight Frank Singapore has appointed real estate veteran Wendy Tang as group managing director with effect from April this year. She will replace current group managing director and chairman Danny Yeo.

Mr Yeo will continue to helm the company as executive chairman of Knight Frank Singapore.

"Together with Danny, Wendy will be responsible for driving the performance of the business across all service lines of the group," said Knight Frank in a press release on Friday.

Ms Tang has amassed 27 years of experience ranging from property development to real estate agency services and fund management. She joins Knight Frank from Beverly Group where she led their development projects in Malaysia over the last five years.

During that time, she spearheaded the design, planning and launch of five residential and mixed-use developments of around 4,300 units, with a total gross development value of over RM2.15 billion. She was with Knight Frank from 1997 to 2000 and 2010 to 2013, during which time she served as executive director and head of residential.

Said Mr Yeo: "In this era of digital disruptions, the real estate landscape is evolving rapidly and we expect to see significant transformation in the industry. Wendy's experience presents tremendous opportunity for the firm to accelerate the growth and the enhancement of our service offerings for our clients."

Redas

The Real Estate Developers' Association of Singapore (Redas) has announced its new management committee for the 2019/2020 term, with City Developments group general manager Chia Ngiang Hong as president.

He takes over from Mr Augustine Tan, who is executive director, property services division, Far East Organization, who served two terms as president. Mr Tan said he is confident the new leadership will "continue to play its pivotal role in the growth and development of the real estate industry in Singapore and beyond".

An industry veteran, Mr Chia brings with him 40 years of corporate leadership and management experience. He joined City Developments in 1981 and is a member of the advisory panel in the BCA (Building & Construction Authority) Academy, and a fellow of the Singapore Institute of Surveyors and Valuers.

He is also board member of the Institute of Real Estate Studies, and immediate past president of the Singapore Green Building Council. Mr Chia chairs the advisory committee of the National University of Singapore's School of Design & Environment and is a member of the department consultative committee.

He said: "I look forward to working closely with them (the Redas committee) on progressing many of the initiatives to grow the industry, promote a pro-business environment, champion excellence and sustainable developments in our built environment for the betterment of the real-estate industry."

There are 20 members in the new management committee.

Aside from Mr Chia, other office-holders include GuocoLand's group managing director Cheng Hsing Yao (first vice-president); Keppel Land's CEO Tan Swee Yiow (second vice-president); Ho Bee Land's group director (projects & marketing) Chong Hock Chang (honorary secretary); Frasers Property Singapore's CEO Christopher Tang (honorary treasurer); Wing Tai Land's senior general manager Quek Chay Hoon (honorary assistant secretary) and CapitaLand Singapore's CEO Ronald Tay (honorary assistant treasurer).

SINGAPORE BUDGET

Budget 2019 could be generous – election or not: analysts

It is expected to be expansionary, given the economic outlook and recent accumulated surpluses, they say

Today in **THE BUSINESS TIMES**

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Commodity Euro			
R1C	14.01.19	75.84	EUR
Commodity Euro			
11C	14.01.19	8111.37	EUR
Commodity USD			
R1C-B	14.01.19	3.92	USD
Commodity USD			
R1C-C	14.01.19	3.33	SGD
Commodity USD			
11C	14.01.19	10146.61	USD

Xtrackers II

Australia Government Bond UCITS ETF			
1C	14/01/2019	234.52	AUD
Europe Government Bond UCITS ETF			
1C	14/01/2019	265.37	USD
US Treasuries Inflation-Linked UCITS ETF			
1C	14/01/2019	276.08	USD
US Treasuries UCITS ETF			
1D	14/01/2019	212.72	USD
Singapore Government Bond UCITS ETF			
1C	14/01/2019	142.03	SGD

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Notice of Books Closure Date & Payment Date for the Special Distribution Amount of 0.752 Singapore dollars per Unit

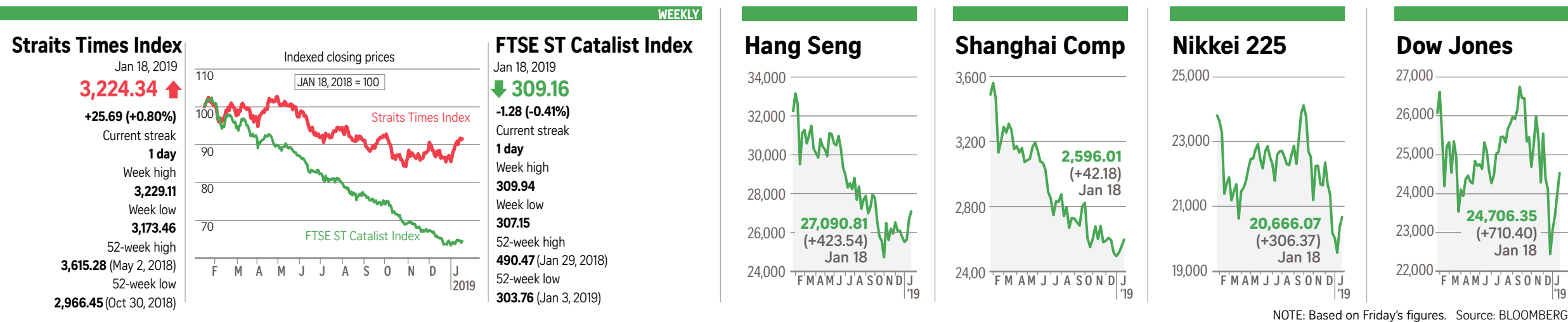
Notice is hereby given that the Transfer Books and Register of Unitholders of RHT Health Trust ("RHT") will be closed at 5.00 p.m. on 28 January 2019 for the purpose of determining the entitlements of Unitholders to the special distribution arising from the disposal of RHT's entire asset portfolio of clinical establishments and hospitals in India to Fortis Healthcare Limited¹ of 0.752 Singapore dollars per Unit ("Special Distribution"). Unitholders whose securities accounts with The Central Depository (Pte) Limited are credited with Units at 5.00 p.m. on 28 January 2019, will be entitled to the Special Distribution to be paid on 4 February 2019.

Important Dates and Times	
Ex-Special Distribution date and time	25 January 2019 at 9.00 a.m.
Books closure date and time	28 January 2019 at 5.00 p.m.
Payment date	4 February 2019

By Order of the Board of
RHT Health Trust Manager Pte. Ltd.
(Registration Number: 201117555K)
(as trustee-manager of RHT Health Trust)
Singapore

18 January 2019

¹ Please refer to the announcement released on 18 January 2019 via SGXNET for more details on the calculation of the Special Distribution.



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OBITUARIES

With Deepest Sympathy and Heartfelt Condolences to Our Director,
Mr Andrew Ming-Hui Lim
On the demise of his beloved father



DAVID JOO KHOON LIM

From:

**Chairman,
Board of Directors,
Management and Staff of
Singapore Press Holdings Limited**



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"Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of
my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever."
Psalm 23:6



Tan Khay Swee Steven

Age: 62

Was called home to the Lord on 19 January 2019.
Dearly missed and fondly remembered by loved ones.

Father: Joseph Tan Thoo Leng (†)
Siblings: Helen Phek Huang Cheong
Raymond Tan Kay Mok
Eric Tan Kay Yong
Maureen Tan Peck Cheng
Henry Tan Kay Kok
Anne-Marie Tan Peck Gek
Lena Evangeline Tan Phek Ngor

Mother: Mary Tang Nia Choo (†)
Spouses: Benedict Cheong (†)
Doris Wong
Bridget Kuan
Wilson Tan

**Nephews, nieces, nieces-in-law, grand-nephews,
grand-niece, all relatives and friends.**
Wake at Block 527 Hougang Avenue 6, Singapore 530527.
Nightly prayers will be held at 8.00pm.
Cortege leaves on Wednesday 23 January 2019 at 8.45am
for Funeral Mass at Church of the Nativity of the B.V.M.,
1259 Upper Serangoon Road, Singapore 534795,
at 9.15am, thereafter to Mandai Crematorium Hall 1
for cremation at 10.45am.



5th Anniversary In Loving Memory of Our Dearest Dad

*Dad,
Your life is full of loving deeds.
Forever thoughtful of our
special needs. Today &
tomorrow our whole life
through, we will always love
and cherish you.*

RAMANATHAN S/O SEENIVASAKAN
Departed on 21 January 2014

Deeply missed & forever cherished by
Wife: CHITRADEVI D/O SUPPIAH,
Children and loved ones.

"One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell
in the house of the Lord all the days of my life." *Psalm 27:4*



David Joo Khoon Lim

Age: 94

was called home to be with the Lord on 19 January 2019.
Dearly missed and fondly remembered by loved ones.

Wife: Monica

Sons:
Andrew Ming-hui Lim
Peter Ming-hua Lim

Grandchildren:
Jonathan David Lim Yi
Valerie Anne Lim Shan
Christopher Mark Lim Xin
Joy Lim Xin
Vanessa Grace Lim En
Eryn Lim Yu

Daughters-in-law:
Patricia Seet Geok Neo
Esther Yee Wai Theng
Grandchildren-in-law:
Grace Tan En Hui
Jonathan Tan Peak Sheng

and all relatives and friends.

Wake is held at Singapore Casket, Regency Hall, Level 2,
131 Lavender Street, Singapore 338737.

Nightly services will be held at 8.00pm.

Cortege leaves on Wednesday, 23 January 2019 at 4.00pm
for Mandai Crematorium Hall 1 for cremation at 5.00pm.

*"Death has nothing to do with going away.
The sun sets. The moon sets. But they are not gone." – Rumi*



In Loving Memory Of



KUMAR K CHAND

(Kumar Kishinchand Gajwani)

03/08/1938 – 20/01/2019

He was loved and will be dearly missed by:

Beloved Wife:

Meira Chand

Children:

Vikram Chand
Anjali & Nick Holland

Grandchildren:

Zubin & Natasha Chand
Aditya Chand
Natasha Holland
Mia Holland

For all Relatives & Friends who wish to attend
The wake will be held at
44 Astrid Meadows #01-01, Coronation Road West, Singapore 269260
on Monday, 21 January 2019 from 12 noon to 7pm.

Private Cremation will be held on Tuesday, 22 January 2019.

Marco and Bhog will be held at Silat Road Gurdwara on Thursday,
24 January 2019 at 4pm-6pm.

No wreaths please. All donations made to 'HCA Hospice Care'

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SEET KUAN POH OSCAR Age: 85

passed away peacefully on 19 January 2019.
Dearly missed and fondly remembered by loved ones.

Wife: Chia Foo Moy Nancy (Deceased)

Sons:

Seet Cheong Fatt Francis
Seet Lin Fatt Frank

Daughters:

Seet Chan Heong
Seet Choon Heong Bronche

Grandsons:

Seet Mun Tat Aaron
Seet Teng Wai Brandon
Tan Jin Yong Bryce

Granddaughters:

Seet Si Ngah Adeline
Seet Si Weng Melanie
Seet Si Lam Whitney
Wang Yandan
Wang Meigui

Daughters-in-law:

Hoang Thi Man Mandy
Tay Beng Hong Michelle

Sons-in-law:

Hong Yew Thiang
Tan Choon Seong Benjamin

Grandsons-in-law:

Ong Zhiwei Kenneth
Ho Kang Shen

And all relatives and friends.

Wake is held at Blk 490 Choa Chu Kang Ave 5,
(Multi-purpose Hall) S'pore 680490 Hp: 9816 6426

Cortege will leave on Wednesday, 23 January 2019
at 12pm for Mandai Crematorium Hall 2
for cremation at 1pm.

*"Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life;
And I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever." Psalm 23:6*



KOH HOOD KHEE

Age: 85

was called home to be with the Lord on 20 January 2019

leaving behind loved ones.

Husband: Peter Loh Boon Yam (deceased)

Sons:

Loh Joseph
Loh Stephen
Loh Henry
Loh Albert
Loh Sunny
Loh Georgie

Daughters-in-law:

Angeline Soah
Jessie Sim
Bessie Teo
Irene Lee
Rowena Tan
Catherine Chan

Grandsons:

Wesley Loh
Isaac Loh
Ryan Loh
Samuel Loh
Clement Loh
Jeremy Loh
Elijah Lee

Granddaughter-in-law:

Junghyun Cho

Daughter:

Loh Doris

Son-in-law:

Reuben Lee

Granddaughters:

Andrea Loh
Romona Loh
Clara Loh
Ariel Loh
Celestine Loh
Abigail Lee

Grandson-in-law:

Lincoln Mah

Wake is held at Blk 624 Hougang Ave 8 S'pore 530624.

Nightly services will be held on 21 January 2019 to 23 January 2019 at 8pm.

Cortege leaves on 24 January 2019 at 10am for funeral service at

Mandai Crematorium Hall 3 at 11am thereafter for cremation at 11.30am.

Om Namah Shivaya



Pakirisamy Govindasamy

Age: 82

Passed away peacefully on 20 January 2019.
Dearly missed and fondly remembered by loved ones.

Wife: Minachi Ramalingam

Daughter: Ranjani

Son & Daughter-in-law: Vedagiri & Santhi
Mother-in-law, brother, sister, sisters-in-law,
brothers-in-law, nephews, nieces, all relatives and friends.

Sam is resting at Block 154 Gangsa Road #08-333,
Singapore 670154. Tel: 9005 1057 / 9451 2131

Cortege leaves on Monday 21 January 2019 at 4.00pm
for Mandai Crematorium Hall 4 for cremation at 5.00pm.

*"Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me
all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in
the house of the Lord forever." Psalm 23:6*



Anne Tay Mui Hoon

Age: 97

"A Life Well Lived"

Was called home to the Lord on 20 January 2019.

A devoted wife to:

Late Peter Lek Joo How

A loving mother / mother-in-law to:

Doreen Lek & Francis Baptist Oei
Maureen Lek & Gilbert Teo
Danny Lek & Peggy Lee

A precious grandmother / grandmother-in-law to:

Bryan Oei, Graeme Oei & Lim Shan-ren,
Amanda Teo & Thomas Tan, Glenn Teo,
Darryl Lek, Cheryl Lek

A doting great-grandmother to:

6 adorable great-grandchildren

Wake is held at St Joseph Dying Aid Association,
Oratory prayer room 1 & 2,
100 Hougang Avenue 8, Singapore 538790.
Visiting hours: 10.00am to 10.00pm

Funeral Mass on Wednesday 23 January 2019
at Church of the Nativity of the B.V.M. at 1.00pm,
thereafter to Mandai Crematorium Hall 4
for cremation at 2.45pm.

"In memoriam"
is for the loved
ones whom you
remember...



"In memoriam"
is for the loved
ones whom you
remember...



*"Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil, for you are with me, your rod and your staff; they
comfort me." Psalms 23:4"*



WELFORD JOHN ALEXANDRA (Prince of Peace)

30 Nov 1957 - 19 Jan 2019

Age: 61

Was called home to be with the Lord on 19 Jan 2019.
Dearly missed and fondly remembered by loved ones.

Wife:

Eliza Monica De Silva

Sons:

Andrew, John, Ashley (Deceased)

Daughters:

Nicole, Vargilia, Bridget, Alexandria, Victoria

And all relatives and friends.

Wake is held at Blk 189, Bishan St 13.

Cortege leaves on 23 Jan 2019 (Wed) at 12.30pm
for Mass at Church of Christ the King at 12.50pm thereafter
for Mandai Crematorium Hall 1 for cremation at 2.05pm.

*It is the secret of the world that all things
subsist and do not die, but only retire from
sight and afterwards return again.*

Ralph Waldo Emerson

Man may be a mere mortal, but his legacy lives on forever.
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SPORT

61

WINS MANNY PACQUIAO HAS, AFTER RETAINING HIS WELTERWEIGHT TITLE IN HIS 70TH BOUT C8



FINAL LEADERBOARD

266	Jazz Janewattananond (Tha)	68 68 65 65
268	Paul Casey (Gbr)	68 67 68 65, Yoshinori Fujimoto (Jpn)
		67 67 66 68
270	Matthew Fitzpatrick (Gbr)	68 67 66 69
275	Prom Meesawat (Tha)	69 69 69 68, Mun Do-yeob (Kor)
		71 65 67 72
276	Sergio Garcia (Esp)	69 68 71 68, Gunn Charoenkul (Tha)
		68 71 67 70
277	Panuphol Pittayarat (Tha)	71 70 70 66, Jarin Todd (USA)
		69 69 70 69, Davis Love III (USA)
		69 68 70 70
278	Masahiro Kawamura (Jpn)	68 72 70 68, Berry Henson (USA)
		70 70 71 67, Dru Love (USA)
		73 67 73 65, Chang Yi-keun (Kor)
		69 68 71 70, Kazuki Higa (Jpn)
		69 71 68 70, Choi Ho-sung (Kor)
		69 69 69 71
.....		
SELECTED:		
282	Johnson Poh (Sgp)	71 70 69 72
293	a-James Leow (Sgp)	68 73 76 76

Jazz Janewattananond posing with the SMBC Singapore Open trophy yesterday. The 23-year-old Thai's 18-under 266 total was the lowest winning score at Sentosa Golf Club's Serapong Course, surpassing the 17-under 267 set by three-time Singapore Open winner Adam Scott in 2010. ST PHOTO: LIM YAOHUI

SMBC Singapore Open 2019

JAZZ ON SONG AT SENTOSA

Thai rising star credits success to a change in mindset and coach for improving his game

Lester Wong

Like the improvisational music genre with which he shares a name, Jazz Janewattananond marched to his own tune yesterday at the US\$1 million (S\$1.36 million) SMBC Singapore Open, and no one could keep up with his rhythm.

Despite former world No. 3 Paul Casey snapping at his heels, the Thai struck all the right chords to fire a six-under 65 in the final round and claim the biggest win of his fledgling career.

His winning total of 18-under 266 (68-68-65-65) was two shots better

than Casey (68-67-68-65) and Japan's Yoshinori Fujimoto (67-67-66-68).

It was the lowest winning score at Sentosa Golf Club's Serapong Course, surpassing the 17-under 267 set by three-time Singapore Open winner Adam Scott in 2010.

After coming up short in his previous Singapore Open outings – third, second and fifth – he tried a different tack to deal with the pressure, and it worked wonders.

“You know, when I was sitting here previously doing the pre-tournament interviews, I wasn't planning on winning.

“My goal was just to grab one of

the four qualifying spots for The Open Championship,” said Jazz, who picked up the winner's cheque of US\$180,000 (S\$244,500).

“I was still thinking the same thing this morning. It wasn't until the back nine that I felt, ‘Oh, I could actually win this’, and then the pressure was on.”

Jazz, 23, was in cruise control after five birdies on his front nine gave him a three-stroke lead.

But the birdies dried up on the back nine and victory looked to be slipping from his grasp after a bogey on the par-4 13th saw his lead over Englishmen Casey and Matthew Fitzpatrick cut to one.

The Thai then displayed nerves of steel to make a par save on the 15th and sink a clutch birdie on the 16th.

Building on his momentum, the world No. 111 conjured up a superb

second shot on the par-five 18th that landed about five feet from the pin. He missed his eagle putt when the ball spun out, but he made no mistake with his birdie chance to end the hopes of Casey and flight-mates Fitzpatrick and Fujimoto. Fitzpatrick (68-67-66-69) finished alone in fourth on 270 after consecutive bogeys on the 15th and 16th.

Jazz credited his coach Peter Cowen, whom he started working with after his Major debut at last year's Open Championship, for helping him improve his ball striking and mental strength.

“In the past, I didn't really know what I was doing. I was pretty much just going out there and playing. But (working with Pete) has given me goals, things I want to do on the golf course,” said Jazz, who became the youngest golfer at 14 years and

71 days to make the cut on the Asian Tour at the Asian Tour International in 2010.

“When you go out to play without thinking of anything, sometimes it can be good but, under pressure, it's tough (to have no goals). That was my mistake in the past.”

Jazz is the third Thai to win the Singapore Open, after Prayad Marksaeng in 2017 and Thaworn Wiratchant in 2001.

Defending champion Sergio Garcia of Spain finished joint seventh on 276 (69-68-71-68). Johnson Poh (71-70-69-72) was the top local finisher, tying for 38th on 272.

He said: “This is my eighth time playing the Singapore Open and the first time I made the cut, so overall, it was a great week.”

Jazz's third Asian Tour win will see him in the top 100 of the world

rankings for the first time. It also earned him a second trip to The Open Championship in July.

He will be joined by Fujimoto, compatriot Prom Meesawat and South Korean Mun Do-yeob, who clinched spots by virtue of being the top four finishers not otherwise exempt.

Asked if he thinks he can be the first Thai to win a Major, Jazz said: “When I was younger, everyone said I would be the first Thai guy to win on the PGA Tour, the first Thai guy to win a Major.

“But, in reality, (world No. 37) Ki-radech (Aphibarnrat) is the one with the biggest chance. He's my role model. My next goal is to try and get more wins on the Asian Tour and then see what happens.”

lesterw@sph.com.sg

Casey comes up short but proud of joint-second finish

FOUR-DIGIT DRAW

Jan 20 2019

FIRST ♦ 2057
SECOND ♦ 2916
THIRD ♦ 2195

STARTERS

1439 1612 1909
2469 4607 5384
5515 6807 7715
9979

CONSOLATIONS

2099 3099 3831
4967 5216 7307
7586 7952 8175
8516

Paul Casey had predicted after the third round of the SMBC Singapore Open on Saturday that he would need to go “six or seven (under) at least” in the final 18 holes to stand a chance of winning.

The former world No. 3 fulfilled his side of the bargain by shooting a six-under 65 yesterday, but it was not enough in the end to overhaul a player who was equally on fire.

Casey signed for a total of 16-under 268 (68-67-68-65) to finish tied second with third-round leader Yoshinori Fujimoto of Japan (67-67-66-68), two strokes behind winner Jazz Janewattananond.

Playing a flight ahead of Jazz, Casey got to within one stroke of the 23-year-old Thai after the former bogeyed the 13th hole at Sen-

tosa Golf Club's Serapong Course.

But the 41-year-old Englishman stumbled to a bogey on the 15th which left him with a mountain to climb.

“Ideally, I would have loved to have won this week, but I'm still proud of the way I played,” said world No. 24 Casey, who was the highest-ranked player in the field.

“It was a good round of golf today, nice and tidy. I made only one error, which was my second shot on the 15th.

“I missed the cut last week in Hawaii (Tournament of Champions, tied 16th), so this felt really good. Whenever I travel, I want to play well and perform, and I did that.”

Like Casey, Fujimoto hardly put a

foot wrong with just one bogey to go with four birdies.

The stocky Japanese smiled for the cameras during the prize ceremony, but revealed his disappointment at his near miss.

“I played really well for four days and it was so close, just two strokes,” said the world No. 180.

“Up to the last hole, I was thinking I would maybe have a chance with an eagle, but Jazz hit it closer (on the 18th green).

“He's a good player. Anyone who wins is always a good player.”

Fujimoto, however, received a consolation prize as his performance earned him one of four qualifying spots for July's The Open Championship.

“I don't actually know anything

about Royal Portrush and playing links golf is always difficult,” said the 29-year-old. “But it's a nice chance to see and play with the top players in the world.”

Meanwhile, father-and-son pair Davis Love III and Dru Love IV finished within a stroke of each other on 277 (69-68-70-70) and 278 (73-67-73-65) respectively.

Dru matched Jazz and Casey for the low round of the day to finish tied 12th in a group of six players that included Internet sensation Choi Ho-sung (69-69-69-71).

The South Korean, who rose to fame with his “fisherman swing”, managed to make his 12th straight cut.

Lester Wong



Paul Casey and Yoshinori Fujimoto both finished two strokes behind winner Jazz Janewattananond. ST PHOTO: LIM YAOHUI

CITY KEEP UP PRESSURE ON REDS

Scorer Sane reveals pep talk by manager Pep 'woke them up' in 3-0 win over Huddersfield

LONDON • For a team with Manchester City's ambitions, Huddersfield were obliging opponents. Pep Guardiola's team duly took advantage of a side whose toes seem tagged for the relegation morgue and, in the process, renewed their threat in the Premier League title race after a comfortable 3-0 away victory yesterday. The gap at the top of the table is back to four points and the message for Liverpool is loud and clear – it is going to be a heck of a job to shake City off. Not that this was the most devastating performance the league

champions will deliver this season. Indeed, they might reflect it was a missed opportunity to add even more sheen to their goal difference. Yet it is difficult to be too critical when the truth was Guardiola's men could win with something to spare despite a performance, by their high standards, that seldom got above six out of 10. Since Liverpool's Roberto Firmino became the last player to score against them on Jan 3, City have now scored 23 times in all competitions without a single one coming back the other way. It works out at a goal, on average,

every 17 minutes and, if anything, it was probably a surprise they did not add more goals against a Huddersfield side put together by caretaker manager Mark Hudson. City were also denied a clear penalty when referee Andre Marriner missed Terence Kongolo's foul on Raheem Sterling and, to Guardiola's irritation, they might have allowed a touch of complacency to creep in once Danilo got lucky for the opening goal. Christopher Schindler inadvertently diverted the City defender's shot into his own net for their opener. Maybe it was too straightforward for the away side. Too easy, even. Perhaps it was a direct consequence of neither David Silva nor Bernardo Silva starting the match. Yet City did have Kevin de

Bruyne and Ilkay Gundogan at the John Smith's Stadium – and it would have been reasonable to think Sergio Aguero's focus might have been sharpened by the fact he had been chosen ahead of Gabriel Jesus, the scorer of seven goals in his last three matches. Whatever the reason, it was certainly unusual to see the reigning champions take the lead, then drop their tempo rather than pour forward again, in the way that is expected of such a team. Guardiola, one imagines, had a thing or two to say about it at half-time and City quickly put that right after the break, with goals from Sterling (54th minute) and Leroy Sane (56th) to wrap up the contest. The scorers admitted that Guardiola had given his team an earful at

the break for not going for the Terriers' jugular, with Sane revealing he "woke us up a little bit at half-time". The German said: "We played quicker in the second half and were better positionally. "He always tries to give us the solution, what we can do better, and he did it again." And there can certainly be no slackening of standards with the Reds stretching their unbeaten home league run to 32 games after beating Crystal Palace 4-3 on Saturday. Jurgen Klopp's men, in the process, set a club record of 60 league points from 23 matches, topping their previous best tally by one, and the German praised his side, calling the mark "crazy". AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE, THE GUARDIAN

NOTHING MORE THAN WE DESERVED

The way we played we didn't deserve more than three goals. We will improve in the future. We have to demand more from ourselves in every game and do our best.

PEP GUARDIOLA, Man City manager, on a relentless drive to better his side.



Manchester City's German midfielder Leroy Sane shoots past Huddersfield goalkeeper Jonas Lossl to score their third goal in the 3-0 victory yesterday. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Furious Sarri slams Chelsea players as 'difficult to motivate'



Alexandre Lacazette (right, partly hidden) scoring Arsenal's first goal against Chelsea on Saturday. The Blues lost 2-0 and manager Maurizio Sarri insisted it was his players' attitude, not his system, that was the problem. PHOTO: REUTERS

LONDON • Maurizio Sarri shamed his Chelsea players by making a remarkable – and perhaps risky – attack on their character on Saturday, suggesting that they may not have the "motivation" and "mentality" of top professionals. He was so furious about the lackadaisical elements of his team's performance in the 2-0 Premier League loss at Arsenal that, for the first time since joining Chelsea in the summer, the Italian reverted to his native language in his post-game press conference. The Blues manager did so "because I want to send a message to my players, and I want my message to be very clear". That message was withering. Sarri said through an interpreter:

"I have to say I'm extremely angry, very angry indeed. This defeat was due to our mentality. "We played against a team that mentally was far more determined than we were and this is something I can't accept. "We had the same issue at Tottenham and we spoke frankly about that particular loss (a 3-1 defeat in November). I thought we had managed to overcome this issue. "But it seems we have an issue with having the right amount of determination and being mentally strong. The fact of the matter is I'm finding that this group of players is extremely difficult to motivate." Despite having the majority of the ball – 64 per cent possession – at the Emirates, the away side were

blunt in attack and casual in defence, and could have conceded more in a first half dominated by the home team, who scored through Alexandre Lacazette and Laurent Koscielny. Even though Arsenal lost Hector Bellerin after the break to a serious-looking knee injury, Chelsea had just one shot on target which again questioned Sarri's decision to start without a recognised striker. Olivier Giroud was named on the bench while Alvaro Morata was omitted ahead of his imminent move to Atletico Madrid. However, he insisted it was his players' attitude and not his system that was the problem despite Eden Hazard again having a limited impact while playing as a "false nine".

Sarri added: "When you see this kind of game, when one team is more determined than the other, you can't really talk about tactics." While Chelsea remain in fourth place, they are now only three points above Arsenal and Manchester United, and Sarri appeared to question whether his side had the stomach for the top-four dogfight. With a 1-0 deficit to overturn against Tottenham in the League Cup semi-final second leg on Thursday, Sarri hinted at a "new player coming in" – widely reported to be Juventus striker Gonzalo Higuain – that could give his team a lift but still wants them to "face up to their own responsibilities". AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE, REUTERS, THE TIMES, LONDON

Mourinho rejects offers, reveals fragile ego at United

LONDON • Jose Mourinho revealed that he has turned down three job offers since being sacked by Manchester United last month, adding he was happy to bide his time before taking on his next challenge. Speaking in his role as a pundit for broadcaster beIN Sports during the Asian Cup on Saturday, the Portuguese also said rivals Pep Guardiola and Jurgen Klopp enjoyed more support at their clubs. "I am happy with these three weeks, I am happy with this experience and I am going to have other experiences that normally I cannot have," Mourinho said.

"But I know me and, I know by the end of March, I will be struggling with my happiness. "I will analyse things, I don't like to speak about it. But I've refused already three options because I didn't feel that it is what I want, so I'm going to be calm in this aspect." At United, Mourinho was left frustrated in the close-season transfer window when Liverpool, in particular, strengthened markedly and Manchester City added to a squad already deep in quality. "At Man City in the first season, Guardiola was not a champion. In the second season, Pep made great

decisions, but those that were supported. In the same summer, he sold four full-backs and bought four backs. "At Liverpool, how many players were there before Jurgen Klopp arrived? If you are a manager and you choose the players to follow your idea, that's one thing. "The other thing is when you are not able to do that." Mourinho also claimed that modern footballers have such fragile egos that one United player asked not to be criticised in front of his team-mates. "When I coach on the pitch, I like

to see myself free because I am in family and I want to be able to criticise everyone," he said. "I had one player say, he was very polite and not confrontational, 'Please, when you criticise me, can you do it in private?'. "I said why and he said, 'Because it's my stature in front of the other players, when you criticise me I don't feel comfortable'. "He was one of the top players of his generation. Nowadays you have to be very smart in the way you read your players and their personalities." REUTERS, AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

SPORTS FIXTURES HIGHLIGHTS				
Event	Home	Away	Timing	Venue
Mon, 21 Jan 2019				
Asian Cup	Japan	Saudi Arabia	7.00pm	LW

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LOTTERY	
TOTO	Mon, 21 Jan 2019, 6.30pm Draw No. 3442/2019
Group 1 Prize	\$2,400,000 est.
Draw Venue: Singapore Pools (Private) Limited, 210 Middle Road, #01-01, Singapore 188994	

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MAKING A NAME FOR HIMSELF

Fandi's second son Ikhsan wants to step out of dad's shadow and succeed in Norway stint

David Lee

He has yet to receive his jersey number at his new club, but Ikhsan Fandi is already clear which number he doesn't want.

Knowing how he looks up to his father Fandi Ahmad, it came as a surprise when the 19-year-old striker sheepishly said: "I don't like 17 lah. That is for my father, and maybe my older brother (21-year-old defender Irfan is actually set to wear No. 16 at Thai League 2 club Bangkok Glass), but not for me."

For decades, 17 has been synonymous with his famous father, who thrilled Singaporeans with his scoring exploits wearing the fabled number on his back.

Hence it speaks volumes when his second son declares he is spurning that number as Ikhsan aims to step out of his father's shadow and make a name for himself at Norwegian second-tier club Raufoss IL. He signed a two-year deal last week after a successful trial.

Before he left for Norway this morning, Ikhsan told The Straits Times: "My aim is No. 9. It is currently worn by my team-mate Anton (Henningsson), but I want to work towards that role as the leading striker."

"The No. 9 is also special to me because I was born on April 9, 1999. But I know I am a new and young player at Raufoss, and I will work my socks off to get to where I want."

It is not easy being Fandi's son. People expect the apple not to fall far from the tree, but Ikhsan has netted five goals in 12 internationals; no other Lion scored more last year.

Beneath his babyface exterior is a steely single-mindedness to succeed - Ikhsan was so determined to complete his homework for an online sports development diploma course before ST met him last week at Jalan Besar that he delayed the interview by two hours.

"Since young, we have always felt that pressure. People expect us to be as good as our father. But my dad always tells us to be ourselves, express ourselves on the field and show people what we can do," said

Ikhsan, who has two younger brothers Ilhan, 16, and Irfan, 12.

"We cannot control what others say, but we can stay focused and work hard to achieve our dreams. Mine are to play top-level football in Europe for a long time and contribute to the national team."

Until he was about five, Ikhsan did not want to be a footballer. His mother, Wendy Jacobs, shared with ST how a younger Ikhsan would kick and injure people on the field.

She said: "He was a bit lost before he found football and, in jest, he said he would rather tap dance or do gymnastics."

Even back then, there were certain traits that would define Fandi's sons as professional footballers.

Jacobs added with a laugh: "When they ask us for things, Irfan is more direct and would tell us what he wants, while Ikhsan would tell us sob stories to get things from us in a more sneaky way."

It is this sort of guile that saw Ikhsan excel in school football in Indonesia, where Fandi coached from 2006 to 2010. He would sometimes take the ball from his goalkeeper and dribble to the other end and score. He was the top scorer in all four years at ACS Jakarta.

Family friend and former international R. Sasikumar, who took Ikhsan and Irfan for training stints with AC Milan, Arsenal, Chelsea and Valencia almost a decade ago, remembered how Ikhsan was able to "glide with the ball" and impressed the coaches there.

Since then, he has modified his game to be more direct and powerful, to the point Lions team-mate and veteran defender Baihakki Khaizan labelled the 1.82m, 79kg Ikhsan "a beast".

"In school football, I may be ahead of other kids, but everybody is equal in professional football and the defenders are tougher," said Ikhsan, who studies many world-class strikers but does not have a favourite. He credited local coaches such as Robin Chitrakar and Abdullah Noor for his development.

"After National Service when I rejoined the Young Lions, I felt I needed to play differently, to be more direct. I don't do fancy tricks and, if pushing-and-running works,



Ikhsan Fandi netted five goals in 12 internationals, more than any other Singapore player last year. PHOTO COURTESY OF MARIUS MYKLESET

I will do it depending on the situation."

His sister, Iman, can vouch for his dedication to his craft.

Ikhsan felt discouraged during NS a couple of years ago as he could not attend football training sessions for six months due to basic military training and an infantry trooper course, and his vocation required him to stay in five days a week.

Loathe to stay still, he worked out at the gym until he "became a body-builder".

Iman, 18, said: "I don't think he is overly obsessed with football, but he trains almost 24/7 because he loves what he is doing and becoming a top football pro has been his dream."

Fandi, who lived that dream 36 years ago with Dutch team FC Groningen as the first Singaporean

to play professional football in Europe, knows the road less travelled will not be easy.

The 56-year-old was out for two months with a thigh injury before his Groningen debut, but scored twice in that first league game against Go Ahead Eagles before that famous strike against Inter Milan in the Uefa Cup in his next match.

Fandi said: "The food and intense training sessions are different from what we are used to in Singapore."

"There were also no Internet or video calls so it was tough to be alone in Holland, where few people spoke English then."

"But Ikhsan has experience living and playing overseas in Chile with his brother in 2014 and 2015, which will be an advantage."

"It is important to stay focused and show his character and ability

NO 17 FOR ME, PLEASE

I don't like 17 lah. That is for my father, and maybe my older brother (21-year-old defender Irfan is actually set to wear No. 16 at Thai League 2 club Bangkok Glass), but not for me.



IKHSAN FANDI, Fandi Ahmad's second son, on not wanting to wear his dad's famous number 17. He wants to make a name for himself at Norwegian club Raufoss.

to challenge for playing time. When he gets the opportunity, he must make an impression."

Sasikumar noted Oman goalkeeper Ali Al-Habsi's rise to the English Premier League when he joined Bolton from Lyn in 2005 as "the best example of Norway being a gateway to the bigger leagues".

He said: "The second division may not be as competitive as the top leagues, but it should still be faster and stronger than the leagues here and Ikhsan will have to cope physically."

"Score 10 goals, and people will start to look at Ikhsan. He may be thrown on as a substitute at the start but, once he gets his first goal, the confidence and goals should flow because he is a mentally tough boy."

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Asian Cup 2019

Vietnam and China through to quarter-finals

DUBAI • Jordan had not conceded a single goal en route to the round of 16 at the Asian Cup, but Vietnam showed they were far from overawed by their opponents' greater pedigree to triumph 4-2 on penalties after the match finished 1-1 following extra time yesterday.

The Middle Eastern side became the first team to book their place in the knockout stage, beating reigning champions Australia and Syria

to win Group B, while the Vietnamese had only squeaked through by virtue of having a superior disciplinary record to Lebanon.

Yet there were no signs of any inferiority complex from Park Hang-seo's Vietnam side as they matched Jordan for effort, with little to separate the teams in a tightly contested match at the Al Maktoum Stadium.

Vital Borkelmans' men, however, opened the scoring in the 39th

minute. Their goal was disputable though, with Vietnam having some grounds for grievance.

They were penalised for a high boot, with Jordan being awarded an indirect free kick inside the box. It also looked like Yousef Al-Rawashdeh had touched the ball to tee-up Baha Abdel-Rahman, who lashed it into the roof of the net.

But the AFF Suzuki Cup champions did not let their heads drop.

Going behind galvanised Vietnam and they responded by peppering Amer Shafi's goal, with Do Hung Dung coming closest to breaching the Jordan defence.

And they were rewarded for their tenacity with Nguyen Cong Phuong's volleyed equaliser six minutes after the break.

Nguyen Trong Hoang sent an inviting cross into the area and Phuong got between their backline

to flick the ball into the net.

But, while both teams went in search of the winner, neither could find the breakthrough.

In the shoot-out, Jordan fluffed their lines with Baha Faisal hitting the bar, while Dang Van Lam proved to be Vietnam's hero, saving Ahmed Samir's effort.

Although Amer Shafi palmed away Tran Minh Vuong's attempt, substitute Bui Tien Dung then con-

verted his penalty, sending his side through to a meeting with powerhouses Japan or Saudi Arabia, who play each other today, on Thursday.

In the later match, China beat Thailand 2-1. Supachai Jaidee opened the scoring for the Thais in the 31st minute, but goals from Xiao Zhi and Gao Lin (penalty) in the second half saw the Chinese through to the quarter-finals.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE, REUTERS

ASIAN CUP

Last 16:
Japan v Saudi Arabia (6.50pm)
Australia v Uzbekistan (9.50pm)
UAE v Kyrgyzstan (tomorrow, 12.50am)
- Singtel TV Ch115 & StarHub Ch209

Lakers squander 21-point advantage

HOUSTON • The third-quarter departure of Lonzo Ball, who turned his ankle, coincided with a few other unfortunate developments for the Los Angeles Lakers.

Around that time, they began to lose their composure. Then head coach Luke Walton got ejected.

The Houston Rockets, who had trailed by 21 points, took advantage to reduce the deficit to two, before ultimately prevailing 138-134 in overtime on Saturday to improve to 26-19 in the National Basketball Association (NBA).

Los Angeles dropped to 25-22 and are 5-8 without LeBron James, who has yet to play since his groin injury against the Golden State Warriors on Christmas Day.

Rajon Rondo has missed the same number of games and the pair are not expected to return for

their game against the Warriors at the Staples Centre today.

While Kyle Kuzma, who paced the visitors with 32 points, bemoaned that the Lakers were now "down our top-three playmakers", the Rockets were equally short-handed as well, missing Chris Paul and Clint Capela.

Their absence was telling, as the home team were behind for the entire game until the final two seconds of regulation time.

However, the difference was that they had James Harden, who led all scorers with 48 points at the Toyota Centre, in what was his 19th consecutive game with at least 30 points.

The six-time All-Star's streak is second to only NBA great Wilt Chamberlain, who recorded 30-plus point runs of 20, 25, 31 and

65 games from 1960-62.

But Harden, who is averaging 42.5 points and 8.9 assists in that stretch, downplayed his feat post-game, telling ESPN's Lisa Salters he did not "have anything to say".

He added: "I'm just trying to do whatever it takes to rack up as many wins as we can... I'm just being me. A little bit more aggressive. Shots are falling. That's it."

The league's Most Valuable Player was far more effusive in his praise of team-mate Eric Gordon, who finished with 30 points and had forced overtime with a three-pointer that knotted the score at 120-120.

Harden added: "That's what he does. He makes big-time shots. He gave us plenty tonight and we needed every bit of it."

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE, DPA

Rowing and glowing at the Hub



Some 800 competitors aged between seven and 60 took part in this year's Singapore Canoe Marathon at the Sports Hub's Water Sports Centre yesterday. The blazing conditions failed to dampen the spirits of the competitors, who paddled between 6km and 30km in various categories in the 17th edition of the event. Guest of honour and Senior Parliamentary Secretary for Home Affairs Amrin Amin (in dark glasses) gamely donned a life vest and paddled 3km in a double sit-on-top kayak with national athlete Mervyn Toh. Minister for Social and Family Development & Second Minister for National Development Desmond Lee, who is also Singapore Canoe Federation Adviser, also joined in the action. PHOTO: AZHAR JALIL

SportsWorld

Slingers beaten by CLS Knights

The Singapore Slingers lost 89-74 to CLS Knights Indonesia in the Asean Basketball League (ABL) in Surabaya yesterday as the hosts dominated from start to finish.

The Knights' Singaporean point guard and former Slinger Wong Wei Long scored 18 points, including three treys that gave him the all-time ABL record of 215 three-pointers, surpassing Filipino Leo Avenido.

Following their second straight defeat, the Slingers have a win-loss record of 7-6 and are sixth in the 10-team ABL.

Indonesian football chief steps down

JAKARTA • Indonesian Football Association (PSSI) chairman Eddy Rahmayadi resigned yesterday, amid the national team's failure to get out of the group stage at last November's AFF Suzuki Cup as well as an ongoing investigation into match-fixing allegations in the national league.

The resignation was conveyed by Eddy himself when he opened the PSSI annual congress in a lavish Bali hotel.

Eddy, a former army general elected as North Sumatra governor last year, was elected to chair PSSI in 2016 and his term was not due to end until next year. XINHUA

Mickelson regains lead in Desert Classic

LOS ANGELES • Phil Mickelson recaptured the lead with back-to-back birdies midway through the back nine and went on to grab a two-stroke advantage over Adam Hadwin in the third round of the PGA Tour's Desert Classic on Saturday.

The American, bidding for a wire-to-wire victory, had trailed Hadwin until a 35-foot birdie putt at the 13th brought him level with the Canadian.

The five-time Major winner shot a bogey-free six-under 66 on the PGA West Stadium Course at La Quinta Country Club for a 22-under 194 total. REUTERS

Ko and Ji share pole position after 66s

MIAMI • New Zealand's Lydia Ko and South Korean Ji Eun-hee each fired a five-under 66 to share the lead after Saturday's third round of the LPGA Tournament of Champions.

Ko and Ji charged into contention by going long on the front side and parring their way home to stand on 13-under 200 after 54 holes at the Four Seasons Resort in Lake Buena Vista, Florida.

Canada's Brooke Henderson, who led by two strokes when the day began, took a bogey at 18 to settle for a 69, falling one stroke off the pace in third. AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Schumacher's son joins Ferrari academy

LONDON • Michael Schumacher's son Mick has followed in his father's footsteps by signing a contract with Ferrari to join the Formula One team's young driver academy.

The 19-year-old German, whose father won five of his record seven championships with the Italian team, will be competing in Formula Two this year after winning the European F3 title last year.

Ferrari said in a statement on Saturday that the teenager would join other members of the academy in pre-season preparation activities next week. REUTERS



Greece's Stefanos Tsitsipas (left) in disbelief after his shock fourth-round win over defending champion Roger Federer at the Australian Open yesterday. PHOTOS: REUTERS

SHOW OF STRENGTH

It was actually very mental. I could have cracked at any moment, but I didn't because I really wanted it bad.



STEFANOS TSITSIPAS, on how he scored the upset win over his idol Roger Federer.

Australian Open 2019

YOUNGER, FASTER, BETTER

Greek Tsitsipas stuns defending champion Federer who rues 'massive regrets' in loss



Rohit Brijnath

Assistant Sports Editor
In Melbourne

From the land of Homer has come a charming young man with a taste for the epic and the theatrical. Stefanos Tsitsipas has style and not merely because he resembles a long-limbed, long-haired hippie who thinks net play is cool. But because he knows how to make defiant and dazzling introductions.

On a cool Sunday night at the Australian Open, the 20-year-old Greek told the wider world who he was by beating the best player ever, in an arena he owns, in front of legends who love him, before a crowd ready to adopt him. Beating Roger Federer in Melbourne always takes

nerve. As the Greek said: "My idol today became pretty much my rival."

Has the guard changed in tennis, people are wondering, but this was not a night about a legend departing but about a young talent arriving. Tsitsipas idolised Federer and then showed him how much he had learnt by beating the Swiss 6-7 (11-13), 7-6 (7-3), 7-5, 7-6 (7-5) in the fourth round. He was the younger man, the faster man and simply the better man.

At the end, a smiling, dazed Tsitsipas stood on the court, his joy laced with relief, holding back his tears as he had held back the Swiss. "I am the happiest man on earth," he said and covered his mouth in disbelief. When dreams come true, words dry up. He had always believed he could win but still he was incredulous that he had.

Later, he was asked if he could go all the way and he replied: "For sure. That's why I'm here. That's why I'm playing, for the trophy."

Federer arrived first in the press room, his face a quiet painting of loss. Nothing ages like defeat. It

will take him a while to forget that he had 12 break points on Tsitsipas' serve but couldn't convert even one. It was like he could remember how to create but not how to finish. Genius doesn't fall apart, it gently fades.

At 37, every lost chance cuts deeper but even in such a moment the Swiss wrapped himself in decency. "I lost," he said, "to a better player who was playing very well tonight. Hung in there, gave himself chances at some point, stayed calm. It's not always easy, especially for younger guys. Credit to him for taking care of that."

One man, the world No. 15, was fighting to be the future and the other, world No. 3, not to be the past. Expectedly desperation littered the court. The first game itself took eight minutes and 14 points, involved two time violations for Tsitsipas for taking too long to serve and one "I love you, Roger" from an overcome lady.

Both these men were wedded to aggression and allied in their willingness to visit the net. As Federer dryly remarked when asked about any similarities with Tsitsipas: "He has a one-handed backhand and I used to have long hair, too. Yeah, so maybe a little bit, sure."

But mostly it is age and experi-

ence which divide these men. The Greek is playing only his seventh Slam and Federer has won 20. Indeed, it is possible that Federer, 37, has CDs in his attic older than Tsitsipas but eventually he couldn't make the Greek dance to his tune.

The tennis was always electric and unrelenting, like toe-to-toe boxing in a large ring. Both men coloured the court with greatness as they hit 123 winners together and played 134 net points, but like always the match was decided by the big points.

Federer somehow won the first set with a lovely, low punched volley, shanked forehands and a drop shot, but then couldn't break Tsitsipas. Over three successive games in the second set the Swiss had eight break points - four of them set points - but the Greek wouldn't flinch. His aggression was irresistible and his speed of shot and foot was sensational. He gave Federer his respect but never his awe.

"It was actually very mental," said Tsitsipas later. "I could have cracked at any moment, but I didn't because I really wanted it bad."

Federer needed that second set and the momentum that would have come with it and later he admitted it: "I have massive regrets,

you know, tonight. I might not look the part, but I am. I felt like I have to win the second set. I don't care how I do it, but I have to do it. Cost me the game tonight."

Tsitsipas won the second-set tie-breaker, broke Federer in the last game of the third set to win it 7-5 and edged him in the fourth set tie-breaker. The crowd pleaded with the Swiss but Federer had run out of shots and comebacks. He was that rarest of things in a long career: not good enough.

Tsitsipas has introduced himself and now he has to establish himself. Later, he said: "For sure it's a good win against Roger. I mean, we all know who Roger Federer is, what he has done in tennis. But I still have to keep my focus, keep my concentration on further goals that I want to achieve. That's a very good beginning. I need to stay humble."

At 1.25am, Tsitsipas was still doing interviews in the press room. Outside applause broke the silent night as a women's match continued. So much had changed in a few hours and yet the tennis always goes on. Federer's journey in the game had not ended, only a Greek odyssey had triumphantly begun.

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Unseeded Collins upsets Kerber in day of shocks

MELBOURNE • World No. 2 Angelique Kerber had been the bookmakers' favourite alongside Serena Williams for the Australian Open women's crown, but no one told Danielle Collins of the odds stacked against her.

The unseeded American, who graduated from the University of Virginia in 2016 as the US' top-ranked college player, paid no heed to rankings, reputation and punters as she humiliated the Wimbledon champion 6-0, 6-2 yesterday.

The 35th-ranked Collins had never savoured a Grand Slam match victory before this year but, after reaching the last eight in her maiden appearance at Melbourne Park, fired a warning to the rest of the contenders that "it's (the wins) going to keep happening".

She told reporters: "I may not have won a Grand Slam match before this but I tell you... I better have many more of these. I just go out fearless, just give it my all."

The 25-year-old's reward for her dominance, peppering the Margaret Court Arena with 29 winners, is a quarter-final tomorrow with Russia's Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova, who upset fifth seed Sloane Stephens 6-7 (3-7), 6-3, 6-3.

Not many would also have bet on unseeded compatriot Frances Tiafoe making it to the last eight in the men's draw but, like Collins, he made it a day to remember.

After upsetting world No. 21 Grigor Dimitrov of Bulgaria 7-5, 7-6 (8-6), 6-7 (1-7), 7-5 to celebrate turning 21, Tiafoe broke down as he revealed how he had supported his mother and father, who are both immigrants from Sierra Leone.

"It means the world," said Tiafoe. "I told my parents 10 years ago I was going to be a pro tennis player and change their lives."

Recalling his unusual path to a Grand Slam quarter-final stage for the first time in his fledgling career, he added: "Obviously, I wasn't a nor-

mal tennis story. I bought a house in Maryland for my mum. My dad is in an apartment in Orlando. That was big, just put us in better situations. Now, I'm trying to do it for me."

His giant-killing feats - he eliminated sixth-ranked Kevin Anderson of South Africa in the second round - have also made world No. 2 Rafa Nadal sit up and take notice.

Tiafoe will be his opponent - for the first time - tomorrow and the Spaniard, who dismissed Czech Tomas Berdych 6-0, 6-1, 7-6 (7-4), admitted he was "a very dynamic player, aggressive and dangerous".

On a day of shocks, Ashleigh Barty also stunned Russia's Maria Sharapova 4-6, 6-1, 6-4 to become the first hometown hope in a decade to reach the Australian Open quarter-finals.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE, REUTERS

AUSTRALIAN OPEN

Day 6: Singtel TV Ch114/115 & StarHub Ch208/209, 8am & 4pm



Danielle Collins of the United States sees her confidence soaring after she humiliated world No. 2 and Wimbledon champion Angelique Kerber of Germany 6-0, 6-2 at Melbourne Park yesterday. PHOTO: EPA-EFE

SPORT



Bastian Dohling of Germany carrying his bike and jumping over one of the six obstacles in the race, en route to winning the Men's Elite category in the OCBC Cycle National Cyclocross Championship yesterday.
ST PHOTO: KELVIN CHNG

PSYCHED UP FOR CYCLOCROSS

Enthusiasts of the sport lap it up on a day of thrills and spills through multiple obstacles

Wang Meng Meng

The Kallang Riverside Park, with the dome of the National Stadium

as the backdrop, is a tranquil and picturesque picnic spot. But that can be transformed into an adrenaline-filled off-road cycling circuit, as seen at yesterday's OCBC Cycle

National Cyclocross Championship.

Now into its fifth edition here, competitors race on an off-road course, which could include sections of pavement, on hybrid bicycles which have the frame of a road bike and the knobbly tyres of mountain bikes.

According to national cyclist Ju-

naidi Hashim, who was the top Singaporean finisher in the men's elite event when he crossed the chequered flag in fifth position, cyclocross is still new in the Republic.

The 37-year-old, who specialises in mountain biking, said: "Cyclocross is still very new here, but it is very popular in Europe and outside of Asia."

"This is my first cyclocross race and this is a good stepping stone to host more events in the future."

"It is good for beginners as mountain biking is more technical and tougher. Cyclocross is a faster event and competitors can still feel the excitement of racing through mud, grass and rocks."

Yesterday afternoon's event saw 45 participants challenging for podium places across the junior, women's, men's elite and men's masters categories.

Each lap at the Kallang Riverside

Park is 2.1km long with competitors running the gauntlet of six obstacles.

The first is a spiral route on a muddy grass patch and participants had to zig-zag across a path lined with trees before shuddering across a stony pavement. Next, they had to dismount, carry their bikes and jump over two hurdles before having to conquer a steep slope where the final obstacle of steps awaited.

Children under the age of seven took part in the kiddie push-bike event where they traversed a smaller course over a bumpy field.

Apart from the men's elite category, where competitors raced to complete five laps of the circuit, all the other competitors needed to complete three laps.

German Bastian Dohling won the men's elite race, finishing in 36min 28.472sec, ahead of Australian

Mike Koreneff (37:03.554) and Swiss Pierre Alain Scherwey (37:57.600). Junaidi was fifth among 11 competitors in 40:19.791.

Australian Stephanie Lim was triumphant in the women's elite field, crossing the line in 32:40.057, ahead of Singaporean Lynette Ngo.

Ngo, an oncologist at Raffles Hospital, is an avid cyclist who considers herself a "roadie" who devours tarmac for breakfast but found cyclocross an intriguing proposition. She said: "I've been doing so much road cycling that it's nice to mix it up after a while."

"It (the course) is very tough as there are some gnarly tree roots."

"It rained last night, so some patches were very muddy, making it unstable to ride, but the section along the waterfront is quite relaxing."

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Pacquiao tames Broner, wants Mayweather rematch

LAS VEGAS • Manny Pacquiao proved that age is no obstacle on Saturday, putting on a 12-round boxing clinic against Adrien Broner to retain his welterweight title in his first fight on US soil in two years.

Pacquiao easily won with an impressive display of superior hand speed and destructive power that landed him a unanimous-decision victory over the American at the MGM Grand Hotel in Las Vegas.

The Filipino great almost knocked Broner down twice in the seventh and ninth rounds, and showed that he can still be a force in the sport despite turning 40 last month.

"I really don't believe my career is over. I proved it in my last fight against (Lucas) Matthysse," Pacquiao said.

"And now I prove it again at the

age of 40 (that) I can still give my best."

Admitting he had wanted to floor Broner for his second straight knockout win, Pacquiao revealed his corner had told him "to counter and wait for opportunities" even though "I wanted to be more aggressive".

In his 70th fight as a professional, he retained the lesser version of the World Boxing Association's two welterweight belts, setting the stage for a rematch with undefeated American Floyd Mayweather, who watched the bout from ringside.

Pacquiao improved to 61-7-2 with 39 knockouts, winning on all three judges' scorecards, including by one tally of 117-111. The other two judges also had it one-sided at 116-112, while his 29-year-old oppo-

nent dropped to 33-5-1.

The eight-division champion is now hoping to avenge his 2015 loss to Mayweather, which became the richest one-day sporting event in history, raking in a record US\$500 million (\$\$679.2 million).

Immediately after his fight, Pacquiao called out Mayweather, taunting the 41-year-old, who has not fought since a technical knockout win over mixed martial arts star Conor McGregor in August 2017, to "come back to the ring".

He added: "I am willing to fight Floyd Mayweather again if he is willing to come back in boxing."

But Mayweather, who had helped promote the event's boxing card, was non-committal when asked if he would take on Pacquiao again, claiming "right now, I am living the happy life". AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE



Manny Pacquiao landing a punch on Adrien Broner during their WBA welterweight world title bout at MGM Grand on Saturday. Pacquiao won on all three judges' scorecards, including by one tally of 117-111. The other two judges also had it one-sided at 116-112. PHOTO: REUTERS

Next 48 Hours

TODAY

FOOTBALL

AFC Asian Cup Last 16: Japan v Saudi Arabia (6.50pm), Australia v Uzbekistan (9.50pm), UAE v Kyrgyzstan (Tomorrow, 12.50am) – Singtel TV Ch115 & StarHub Ch209. Spanish LaLiga Eibar v Espanyol (StarHub Ch213, tomorrow, 3.55am).

TENNIS

Australian Open Day 8 (Singtel TV Ch114/115 & StarHub Ch208/209, 8am & 4pm).

TOMORROW

FOOTBALL

AFC Asian Cup Last 16: South Korea v Bahrain (8.50pm), Qatar v Iraq (11.50pm) – Singtel TV Ch115 & StarHub Ch209.

TENNIS

Australian Open Day 9 (Singtel TV Ch114/115 & StarHub Ch208/209, 8am & 4pm).

For latest updates, go to singtelv.com.sg & starhubgo.com

David Lee

A week after his sensational Thailand Masters victory over Chinese great Lin Dan, Singaporean shuttler Loh Kean Yew reached another final at the Swedish Open in Lund yesterday.

The 21-year-old was, however, beaten 21-11, 21-15 in 40 minutes by Japan's world No. 133 Minoru Koga.

The Swedish Open is a BWF International Series event on the Grade

3 Continental Circuit, below the Grade 2 World Tour level in which Loh had beaten Lin.

In yesterday's final, world No. 77 Loh led in the early stages and made some brilliant smashes and drop shots in long rallies, but Koga gradually seized the initiative by cleverly moving his opponent around the court.

While Loh's winning streak ended at 11 matches, other local shuttlers tasted success in the same tournament.

Danny Bawa Chrisnanta and Tan Wei Han won the mixed doubles final after beating Denmark's Mikkel Mikkelsen and Mai Surrow 21-14, 21-16 in 33 minutes.

The world No. 171 pair stretched their unbeaten start this year to 14 wins following their Estonian International triumph the week before. In both tournaments, they have had to progress from the qualifiers.

Danny and Tan formed their partnership last year and have played only four tournaments together.

Tan, 25, said: "I'm pairing with Danny now because my previous partner, Terry Hee, enlisted for National Service."

"The coaches felt Danny and I had potential as a team and we are very pleased to win three tournaments in our short time working together."

The trio will be competing at the Jan 26-Feb 1 Singapore National Open Championships.

davidlee@sph.com.sg

life

D

HOT SAUCE WITH SATAY?

Celebrity chef David Rocco has his food faux pas

D8



The secret to a rich life is to have more beginnings than endings.

— Dave Weinbaum

Live more.
Bank less. 

I'm not lazy, I have ADHD



Adult patients with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) usually range in age from 22 to 45, said Dr Bhanu Gupta, a senior consultant at the Institute of Mental Health's department of mood and anxiety. PHOTO: ISTOCKPHOTO

Adults can have the condition too, which involves difficulty focusing, being impulsive and hyperactive, say doctors

About two years ago, Alex (not his real name) found himself increasingly depressed, to the point where he sought out a psychiatrist for the first time.

"I remember procrastinating on replying to e-mails and I had a phobia of opening e-mails," said the 34-year-old assistant university professor.

"Every day, I would psyche myself to face my e-mails and by the end of the day, I would be more depressed."

This went on for a couple of months and he ended up ignoring most of his e-mails.

"Colleagues or secretaries would respond to e-mails in the middle of the night. There's no separation between work and leisure time."

He was feeling down and felt weak for most of the day, except when he taught a class or lifted weights at the gym.

Eventually, he saw the psychiatrist, who diagnosed him as depressed. Although Alex was prescribed an antidepressant, he said it did not help.

One day, he stumbled upon a long comment that someone had left on a YouTube video on attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), a mental health condition characterised by inattention, impulsive behaviour and/or hyperactivity.

Among the points mentioned, the writer said the ADHD person may be stressed to the point of feeling ill because "he has not started any of his essays that are due, but has sat

for hours researching string theory online".

After reading it, Alex "understood in a flash" that he must have ADHD. He then got his psychiatrist to refer him to an ADHD specialist and was diagnosed with the condition about a year ago.

Alex, who moved from an Eastern European country to work here three years ago, said he is predominantly inattentive and has been like this since he was young.

The key symptoms of ADHD are:

- **Inattention:** Patients have difficulty focusing or sustaining attention. They get easily distracted, have poor planning or organising skills and tend to procrastinate.
 - **Hyperactivity and impulsivity:** These include difficulties sitting still, queueing and speaking without thinking first.
- There are three types of ADHD. Patients are predominantly inattentive, hyperactive-impulsive or a combination of the two.

MORE ADULTS DIAGNOSED WITH ADHD

Most ADHD cases are diagnosed during childhood, though there are some, like Alex, who managed to cope with the symptoms when they were young only to realise they have the condition later on.

The Institute of Mental Health (IMH) has been running an Adult ADHD clinic to address the demand for assessment of adults with ADHD for six years now.

In 2017, it had 27 patients aged 18

There continues to be family members who do not believe ADHD to be a true illness and that it is simply laziness on the part of the patient.

”

PSYCHIATRIST LIM BOON LENG

and older who were diagnosed with ADHD, up from 20 in 2016.

Adult patients usually range in age from 22 to 45, said Dr Bhanu Gupta, a senior consultant at IMH's department of mood and anxiety.

Some adults seek help from private psychiatrists like Dr Lim Boon Leng, who is at Gleneagles Hospital.

He had 180 adult ADHD patients last year, up from less than 100 in 2015.

These adult ADHD patients struggle at work or in their studies. Some seek help when their child is diagnosed with ADHD as they think they have it too. ADHD tends to run in families.

As ADHD is a lifelong condition that begins in childhood, one of the things that doctors do with adult patients is ask for school reports and to speak to a family member if possible, said Dr Gupta.

A person with ADHD may do well in primary and secondary school, but in tertiary institutions, when left to his own devices, his performance can decline markedly, he said. "For a person who was earlier recognised as quite bright and is now failing, it can lead him to a state of depression," Dr Gupta added.

"In the past, people thought you just outgrow it," he said. "You see less of the hyperactive and impulsive parts as the brain matures. But the inattention part continues to affect them."

This explains why those with ADHD are likely to have relationship problems and career difficulties, unless they are in suitable jobs.

They are also more prone to anxiety disorders, depression and substance abuse.

Many people with ADHD remain undiagnosed, said Dr Gupta. As awareness grows, more people with the condition are expected to seek help, he added.

COMMONLY MISUNDERSTOOD

"People come to us when they see themselves as different. The things that their peers find easy to do, they don't," said Dr Gupta.

"People tell them to not be lazy, that they are good for nothing, that they are not disciplined. They have come to the point where they are disillusioned with themselves."

In a relationship, the ADHD person may struggle.

"If you promise your wife you're going to get her a ring, it isn't as if the intention wasn't there, but you get distracted and never get to it," said Dr Gupta.

As a parent, the ADHD person will end up feeling he is not doing enough for his children, Dr Gupta added.

For instance, the parent may want to plan a holiday for his children, but does not do it in advance and, as a result, the trip does not materialise, he said.

"There continues to be family members who do not believe ADHD to be a true illness and that it is simply laziness on the part of the patient," said Dr Lim.

MEDICATION AND THERAPY CAN HELP ON D2



Joyce Teo

Medication and therapy can help

FROM D1

One of Dr Lim's patients, a 35-year-old father, could not keep his study room neat or file his documents correctly as he has difficulties with organisation.

He would zone out during conversations with his clients and superiors. He also spaced out when conversing with his wife and missed out on obligations such as taking his children for immunisations.

Consequently, his marriage became strained, said Dr Lim.

"He would be doing his work, but would be drawn to his colleagues' conversations, unimportant e-mails and messages, as well as YouTube videos and other social-media posts. As a result, he would need much more time to complete his work compared with his peers."

His patient also found it extremely hard to start projects or tasks that require mental effort, added Dr Lim.

"I think the most common misunderstanding regarding ADHD is that it involves a lack of attention," said Alex.

He added that people with ADHD can focus very well on things that they like and simply have weaker control over attention.

"In my case, I had (and, to a lesser

extent, still have) trouble doing or focusing on anything that is not intrinsically interesting or rewarding," he said, adding that he would then procrastinate.

"I always found it mysterious that my colleagues of the same age are able to write books and prepare long-term projects. To me, it was beyond human ability."

"I can be hyper-focused when the motivation is there. For example, when I teach, I am very present."

NOT ALL BAD

ADHD can be treated and by adulthood, many people with the condition have developed enough skills to help themselves.

While medication helps, not everyone with ADHD needs it.

"You can have ADHD and still do well. Many people just learn how to work around their symptoms," said Dr Gupta.

Medication can help a person with ADHD focus better, while talk therapy can help with emotional disturbances that can arise from life difficulties surrounding the condition, said Dr Lim.

He said treating with medication is successful in about 70 per cent of ADHD cases and can improve patients' quality and effectiveness at work.

Patients will need to discuss the



People with ADHD can zone out during conversations at work and face difficulties with organisation. PHOTO: ISTOCKPHOTO

benefits and side effects of treatment with their doctors. Side effects of medication include a faster heart rate and reduced appetite.

As for Alex, ADHD medication made a big difference.

"The medication allowed me to cut out all the distractions. If I had to do the dishes, do my research and write e-mails, I would wander around my apartment in between and waste time and watch my Facebook feed," he said.

"With the medication, I was able to decide that this is what I want to do now and then do it. It gave me control over my life."

He could also read to relax when previously he could not as he was distracted by social media.

Alex also saw an ADHD coach who helped him devise strategies to deal better with his condition.

"I am a lot more content... My depression just went away."

joyceteo@sph.com.sg

How to cope with ADHD

The demands of life can be overwhelming for a person with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), but there are ways to gain control. Dr Bhanu Gupta, a senior consultant at the department of mood and anxiety at the Institute of Mental Health, said many people with ADHD devise their own strategies to cope with it.

1 BREAK DOWN TASKS INTO BITE-SIZED ONES

This is so a bigger task does not overwhelm you and cause you to feel that you are not achieving, said Dr Gupta. You will feel better when you complete each smaller part.

For instance, if you have an essay to write, do not attempt to do it all in one sitting. Work on the introduction before lunch, for instance, and the body afterwards.

2 SET YOUR OWN DEADLINES

If you are always doing things at the last minute, set an earlier deadline for yourself so you complete tasks in time.

3 USE CALENDARS

Use this to plan and organise your life so you will not forget appointments and deadlines. Some people with ADHD get their wife or secretary to plan their activities for them, said Dr Gupta.

4 RECOGNISE HOW YOU WORK BEST

Find out which is the best way to stop yourself from getting distracted when you work or study.

A person with ADHD may find that he can work while listening to music, for example.

Dr Gupta said some may take a walk while doing their work or thinking about an idea.

"Sometimes, they sit at a cafe to work. Quite often, it helps them to be less distracted when there is background music playing and there is buzz around them," he added. "Paradoxically, it calms their mind and helps them to tune themselves out and focus. Maybe their mind is consciously trying to focus."

5 GET A JOB THAT PLAYS TO YOUR STRENGTHS

Certain jobs are more suited to people with ADHD as some of its traits – creativity, multi-tasking and high energy – can be turned into strengths in the right jobs.

"If you're a disc jockey, work in marketing, are a sports teacher or in a job where you don't have to sit down for long hours, ADHD may work in your favour," said Dr Gupta.

The worst is doing something you are not interested in, he said. Things become difficult then.

Famous personalities said to have ADHD include Microsoft founder Bill Gates and the late Ikea founder Ingvar Kamprad.

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~Ms Song, 72, Retiree



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~Mr Guo Cheng Chuan, 59, Delivery Man



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~Mdm Chua, 62, Childcare Helper

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Joyce Teo

It is common in Asian cultures to hear of elders advising those who have chickenpox to avoid consuming dark sauce in case their scars turn dark.

Another old wives' tale is to avoid eating seafood and eggs after surgery as these foods will cause ugly scarring.

"There is no medical evidence to prove these theories, but I usually tell my patients that if it is something they believe in, it's better to avoid (eating such things)," said Dr Pearlle Tan, a consultant at the department of plastic, reconstructive and aesthetic surgery at Singapore General Hospital.

This is because if they develop an unattractive scar, they would think it was due to the prawn or squid they ate, she added.

Scars are permanent, though many do fade and become less noticeable over time.

Some scars, such as keloids – raised scars that are more common in Asians than Caucasians – can grow much larger than the wound that caused the scar.

Treatments can make scars less visible. In general, the earlier a scar gets treated, the better the results, said Dr Tan.

Some scars can become dry, painful and intensely itchy. If a scar forms over a joint, it can become a tight band that restricts movement. Severe scars may need a combination of plastic surgery and adjuvant treatment such as laser therapy or corticosteroid injections.

Laser resurfacing uses laser to remove the outermost layers of skin to improve appearance. PHOTO: ST FILE

SILICONE GEL AND SHEETS

These can improve the texture, colour and height of scars. They can also help in lessening the pain and itching some scars cause.

Dr Tan said silicone sheets keep scars hydrated and can be effective in reducing thickness, pain, itchiness and pliability of some thickened, raised scars.

Silicone sheets should be worn for as many hours of the day as possible – at least for 12 hours.

Silicone gel helps to hydrate scars and has been shown to be effective in softening them while reducing itching and discomfort.

Apply it twice a day, said Dr Tan, and if you plan to go out, apply sun-block on top of the silicone gel.

SCAR MASSAGE

After your incision has healed, your surgeon will show you how to perform scar massage using either moisturiser or silicone gel.

The massage and use of silicone gel help with overall scar therapy and maintenance, but will not make scars disappear.

LASER-RESURFACING TECHNIQUES

These use laser to remove the outermost layers of skin to improve appearance.

A combination of these, together with the use of natural or synthetic skin fillers, can be used to treat thinned-out or atrophic scars, for instance. These are scars that sit below the surface of the skin and can develop after severe acne or chicken pox.

Skin fillers may be done with our own fat (autologous fat grafting) or with synthetic (hyaluronic acid) material.

Autologous fat grafting has been shown to improve both the appearance and symptoms of scars, with the scars trending towards more normal-looking skin.

PLASTIC SURGERY

This may be needed depending on the severity of the scars. It can be done to improve appearance and reduce pain.

• Dr Tan's department will be holding a free public forum titled Unmasking Plastic Surgery at the Mochtar Riady Auditorium at the Singapore Management University Admin Building on March 2, during which scar treatment will be covered.

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SLEEP WELL TO PERFORM BETTER IN ALL YOUR ENDEAVOURS

Good sleep performance is intrinsic to a high quality of life. However, many of us do not truly appreciate the value of sleep because we are often so caught up in getting 101 things done daily and reaching our life's goals. Sarah Tang, an accomplished gymnast and business owner, is a typical urbanite who's always on the go. She shares with us how she manages the demands of everyday life, as well as her quality of sleep.

WHAT CHALLENGES DO TOP PERFORMERS LIKE YOU FACE?

Sarah trained alongside the national gymnastics team since she was 12 and took part in numerous national and regional competitions during her teens. She now owns a gymnastics school and is actively involved in coaching budding gymnasts. She keeps up with an intensive training regimen, and continues to participate in national and overseas gymnastics competitions.

"In a fast-paced society like ours, most of us have multiple hats to wear and numerous KPIs to meet. As a business owner, I'm juggling myriad tasks and seeking to achieve the best results all the time. As an athlete, I strive to maintain an optimal level of fitness, sustain my stamina, sharpen my mental acuity, and manage physical stress and injuries," said Sarah.

HOW DO YOU STAY ON TOP OF THINGS?

"As I'm up and about for rather long hours each day, I need my 'power sleep' in order to recharge and be ready to perform at my peak the following day, whether at work or in a competition.

Every sporting competition is a mental challenge as much as a

physical one. Acuity matters greatly in gymnastics, where the margin for error is extremely narrow. In the split seconds we're airborne while flipping or leaping, gymnasts need to make numerous observations, calculations and adjustments to ensure optimal execution of each move.

When preparing for a competition, it's crucial that I'm able to balance the increased training load with adequate rest and proper physical recovery. So I'll do whatever I can to ensure I stay in top form, such as having hot baths, massages, a nutritious diet, and of course, high performance sleep."

WHAT DOES THE TERM "SLEEP PERFORMANCE" MEAN TO YOU?

"We do not hesitate to invest in our education and health needs as we regard them as intangible assets that enable us to improve our performance, which in turn produce good returns and enhance our quality of life. We'll also opt for gadgets and equipment that can enhance our work productivity and enjoyment of life. Therefore we should look upon sleep in a similar vein, and invest in the achievement of high quality sleep performance to help us keep up with our commitments and aspirations.

My idea of good sleep performance is the ability to sleep comfortably

and soundly through the night. To this end, my mattress of choice is the Simmons® Beautyrest® Star Energia. It brings me the much-needed uninterrupted sleep. Also, it is made of natural latex, which allows superior air circulation and does not feel stuffy if I lie in the same position for a long time.

The quality of my sleep performance directly and significantly affects my performance, both physical and mental, and helps me to keep pushing on, day after day."



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Have healthy work habits

By ARUL JOHN

A large part of our lives revolves around our professions. Therefore creating healthy habits around the office is an integral piece of the routine. Fortunately, drastic steps are not necessary. Instead, small changes in behaviour and the environment are more than enough to start reaping the benefits. Start with these five healthy habits:

Drink enough water

Water is one of the big work pillars because it affects every aspect of our lives. Afternoon hunger cravings, random headaches, and general feelings of foggy can be attributed to dehydration. Staying hydrated improves your rate of weight loss, your mood, your brain functioning, and your energy levels.

Replace the sweets with fruit and nuts

Instead of fighting with your natural impulsive behaviour, design an environment that is set up to help you succeed despite those impulsive behaviors. Instead of impulsively reaching for the nearest junk food, reach for your fruit and nuts bowl. Fruits and nuts will provide your body with quality nutrients and an assortment of vitamins and minerals along with providing energy to help you get through the day.

Implement standing and small activity breaks

Sitting for excessive periods can make you more sedentary, which in turn can increase your risk for

diabetes and heart diseases while potentially causing back pain. A simple strategy is to stand every 30 minutes. This break helps your back, shoulders, hips, and neck, but also decreases your sitting time. During the break, take a stretch, or loosen the tension in your feet. Also take the stairs when possible, park further away, have walking meetings, and walk to lunch if possible.

Pay attention to your posture

Your posture makes a difference on the quality of your day. Having less-than-ideal posture affects your mood, reduces your lung functioning leading to less oxygenated blood to the brain. Having the ideal posture helps your confidence, energy levels, reduces stress and makes you more productive at work.

Add positive elements to your office

Using positive imagery and elements can help turn potential stressful situations into peaceful ones. Decorate your area with positive affirmations, have some sticky notes or messages with reminders about why you're pursuing your various goals. These positive reminders keep you on the right track as you grow in your life. Another unique option is to add an indoor plant, which has been shown to help productivity by 12 percent.

This article provides general information only and is not a substitute for medical advice. Please consult medical or healthcare professionals for advice on health-related matters.



Photos: iStock

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DocTalk

Dollars and sense of a healthy workplace

Companies that help their staff monitor their health can reap benefits such as productivity and lower medical costs



Andrew Epaphroditus Tay

My previous stint in a local community hospital left an indelible impression on me. Unlike major restructured hospitals, which focus on acute care, community hospitals provide intensive inpatient rehabilitation and post-acute care over a typical period of four to six weeks. Often, the community hospital is where patients start to realise the weight of their healthcare cost. I've seen too many patients there struggle with the stress of not just a big hospital bill, but also the reality of not having a regular income to

fund their living expenses upon their discharge. A patient's healthcare cost is not just the hospital bill he gets. There is also the cost of his job loss, loan-repayment vulnerability, mortgage woes and long-term medical care, not to mention the stress of juggling all these. Here is a typical example: A patient with stroke symptoms rushes to a restructured hospital for emergency and acute care treatments. His loved ones then have to deal with difficult decision-making processes and confusion in the intervening days. They heave a sigh of relief when the patient is deemed medically stable to be discharged to a community hospital for intensive rehabilitation. And that is when the reality of dealing with the cost starts to set in. The greatest fear among patients is having to burden their loved ones, as well as obstructing their loved ones' career ambitions. If you multiply one patient's cost by 30,000 – which is the approximate annual local incidences of cancer, heart attack and stroke combined – and include the cost of supporting their dependants, you have a grave national employment and productivity problem. This has been estimated at \$15.65 billion or 3.8 per cent of Singapore's gross domestic product. To effect a change and make healthcare costs less burdensome

for people and the nation, we must focus on preventive health. **GET HEALTHY AT WORK** Companies can and should play a big part in this. It's a win-win situation for them and their employees. An employee typically spends about 11 hours at work and on the commute to work, leaving only a small portion of his waking hours for other activities. With 70 per cent of the resident population in the workforce, the workplace is an ideal setting to influence health behaviours. As he has limited free time for domestic duties, family bonding, meal preparations and personal reflection, he is likely to ignore taking good care of his health. Yet, health behaviours account for 80 per cent of deaths from non-communicable diseases, according to the World Health Organisation. Employers are thus increasingly and ethically expected to share the responsibility of protecting and enhancing the health of their employees. This is particularly so, given the sedentary lifestyle risks that work places on staff. It is why employers should have programmes that help to improve the health of employees and hence, their productivity. Such programmes will help staff to better control their chronic diseases and, in the process, lead to



lower medical expenses for the companies. A company's comprehensive risk management process should include these six approaches: on-site health screening, a chronic disease management programme, on-site physical activities, vaccination programmes, a smoking cessation drive and healthy eating initiatives. Many global companies, including PepsiCo, have reaped considerable savings from maintaining workplace wellness programmes. And most of the savings are a result of reduced absenteeism and a reduction in direct medical costs. Closer to home, the "Check Car, Check Body" programme by ComfortDelgro and the Health Promotion Board (HPB) helped many drivers realise that they had at least one chronic condition like hypertension, diabetes or cholesterol issues and to start managing it.

GSK (Singapore), the 2017 Singapore Health Award (Achievement accolade) recipient, also has a chronic disease management programme, where it employed a case-coordinator to help employees manage their chronic diseases. For a company's workplace wellness programme to succeed, it needs buy-in from its top leaders. Occasionally, pilot studies might have to be conducted to generate a business case before they commit to it. In any case, one must be relentless in the effort to garner leadership's commitment and sustain that support with periodic data analytics update. It is also important to not let budgetary commitment hinder the implementation of a workplace health programme. People tend to attribute the health programme successes of large firms to their relatively large revenues. However, small companies with sustainable

business operations can have equally successful health programmes. Big and small companies can tap the HPB for help. A company can start with any type of health initiative that applies to all employees, be it a vaccination drive or an on-site health-screening programme, for instance. The idea is to initiate conversations and raise awareness on preventive health among staff, thereby generating a momentum leading to discussions on other health initiatives. Importantly, companies must measure the success of their health programmes. They can consider the following:

- Has it rolled out at least one of the six health initiatives as mentioned earlier?
- What is the participation rate?
- What is the impact on the business? For instance, what is the value on investment or return on investment? How many heart attacks has the company prevented?

Singapore's population is ageing and healthcare cost is projected to rise accordingly. The same applies in the workplace, with the medical cost of each employee projected to double, from \$946 in 2016 to \$1,973 in 2030. Employees cannot simply hope for more medical care benefits as the company will incur a higher operating expenditure, which is not sustainable. The key, then, is for the company to focus on integrating preventive health initiatives into the company's business operations, and for the employees to support such initiatives. These programmes will only benefit people as they get help with improving their health and managing chronic conditions they may have. Hopefully, this means that fewer people will end up in community hospitals worrying about mounting healthcare expenses and burdening their loved ones.

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- Dr Andrew Epaphroditus Tay is a medical doctor who provides occupational health services and strategies in a multinational company.

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Exotic K-drama encounters

Discover the alluring locales of *Memories Of The Alhambra*, *Terius Behind Me* and *Encounter*

Yip Wai Yee
Entertainment Correspondent

K-drama fans have been swept away not just by the sweet romances in the plot, but also the locales they are filmed in, as two of the hottest new shows take viewers to exotic locations.

Romantic drama *Encounter*, which stars A-listers Song Hye-kyo and Park Bo-gum, had many scenes shot in Havana, Cuba, while fantasy series *Memories Of The Alhambra*, starring Hyun Bin and Park Shin-hye, was largely filmed in Spain and Slovenia.

Coming up in May, the action-thriller series *Vagabond*, starring Lee Seung-gi and Bae Suzy, will have them running through Portugal and Morocco.

Of course, it is not new for K-dramas to feature overseas locations. Older shows, however, tended to feature these places only as a tiny part of the show before having the characters return to South Korea.

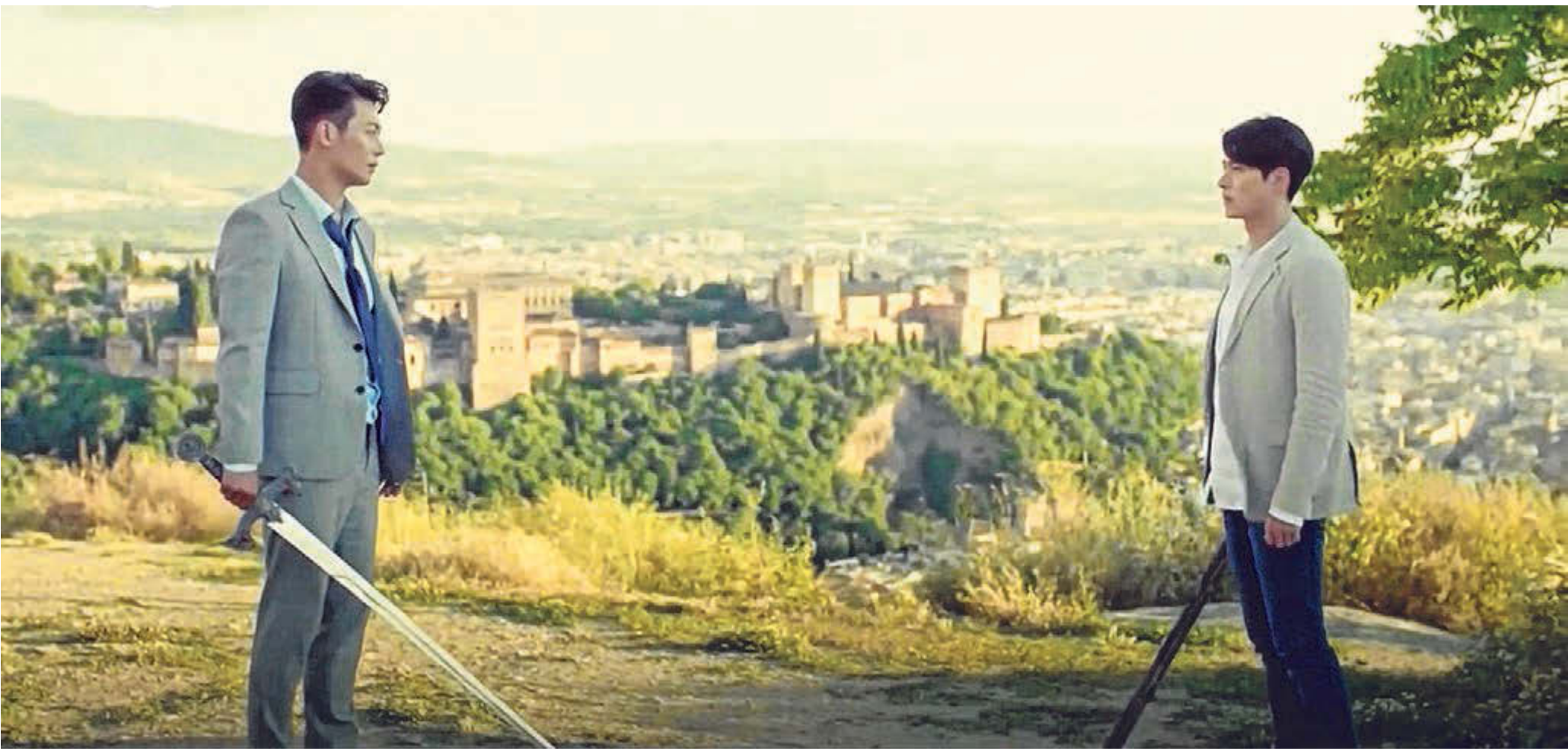
In the hit series *Boys Over Flowers* (2009), for example, a handful of episodes had the characters fly to Macau and New Caledonia for short holidays.

Now, such foreign locales are often much more integral to the stories themselves – a move likely made to set these shows apart from others in the saturated K-drama market that typically feature the same few Seoul spots.

Find out where some of the most iconic scenes in these hot K-dramas were filmed.

yipwy@sph.com.sg

• *Memories Of The Alhambra* is streaming on Netflix. *Encounter* and *Terius Behind Me* are available on Viu.



Jin-woo (played by Hyun Bin) and Hyung-seok (Park Hoon) meeting at Granada's San Miguel Alto Shrine.

MEMORIES OF THE ALHAMBRA

In this fantasy drama, investment company chief executive Jin-woo (Hyun Bin) travels to Granada, Spain, to meet the mysterious creator of a ground-breaking new AR (augmented-reality) game. He fails to find the creator, but instead locates the creator's sister, Hee-joo (Park Shin-hye), who runs a hostel in the city.

The entire series is largely set in Granada – Alhambra in the title refers to the stunning palace and fortress complex in the city – but the drama was shot in other parts of Europe as well, such as Slovenia.

The first episode's night scene, where Jin-woo is seen testing out an AR game and battling mediaeval knights, was filmed around Hercules Fountain in the Old Town of Ljubljana, Slovenia.

When Jin-woo discovers that there is a second player in the game, Hyung-seok (played by Park Hoon), he meets him for the first time at Granada's San Miguel Alto Shrine. The place is set at a high point and is thus popular with tourists who wish to get a panoramic view of Granada.



ENCOUNTER

Here, carefree young man Jin-hyuk (Park Bo-gum) meets the older and much more successful Soo-hyun (Song Hye-kyo) by chance while they are in Havana, Cuba.

Even after they return to South Korea, the drama regularly features flashback scenes of their brief encounter in Cuba, indicating just how significant their time there together was.

One of the most iconic images from the show, where Soo-hyun is seen leaning on Jin-hyuk against a dreamy water backdrop, was filmed at the Malecon esplanade in Havana. The entire stretch is a famous boardwalk housing not just eateries and residences, but also important historical sites, such as the Castillo de la Real Fuerza (Castle of The Royal Force) bastion fort.

As for the beautiful heritage hotel where Soo-hyun is seen staying at in Havana (above), that is the Hotel Nacional de Cuba, which is more than 80 years old and has official national monument status.

The pair are also seen strolling through other Havana sites such as the Antonio Maceo Park and Central Park Havana.

PHOTOS: INSTAGRAM

TERIUS BEHIND ME

When single mother Ae-rin (Jung In-sun) loses her husband, she and her black-ops agent neighbour Kim Bon (So Ji-sub) try to find out more about a supposed conspiracy her husband was involved in.

Even though much of the show is located in South Korea, there are a number of key flashback scenes featuring Bon in Poland.

For example, the scene where he meets his spy agent partner Candy (Nam Gyu-ri), at a classical music concert inside a stunning heritage building, was filmed at Palace On The Isle at Lazienki Park in Warsaw, Poland. The place used to be the Polish king's summer residence and is now a tourist spot.

A later scene, when Bon attended to a dying Candy (right), was filmed in Krzywe Kolo, a street in the Old Town of Warsaw, Poland.



Fans were thoroughly entertained by South Korean boyband BTS, which comprise (from far left) Jungkook, Jimin, Jin, V, RM, Suga and J-Hope. PHOTOS: BIG HIT ENTERTAINMENT



BTS pull off blockbuster show

REVIEW/CONCERT

BTS WORLD TOUR "LOVE YOURSELF" IN SINGAPORE
National Stadium
Last Saturday

Jan Lee

South Korean boyband BTS – arguably the biggest boyband in the world at the moment – can do little wrong by their league of ardent fans

right now. But Saturday's 2½-hour concert – their second in Singapore – was without a doubt a blockbuster one for even novice K-pop concert-goers.

No matter what one might think of BTS or their music, between the backbreaking dance moves, heart-pumping tracks and an audience that engulfed the stadium with screams and chants, the band showed why it is chalking up billions of dollars for the South Korean economy.

Bubbles, confetti, synchronised lighting, a water canon spray and the generous use of pyrotechnics accented a beautifully designed stage, which extended throughout all three segments of the mosh pit.

The third stage, which was fairly close to the seated audience, was connected to the main stages by a small moving platform, taking the band members closer to those seated further behind.

The show opened with *Idol* (2018) to hype up the crowd and the

concert also boasted favourites such as *Save Me* (2016), *I Need U* (2015) and *DNA* (2017).

The vocal performances had room for improvement. They faltered on some high notes and their vocals belied exhaustion or felt strained at times.

Their rapping, however, remained strong throughout, particularly on *Tear* (2018), which Suga, RM and J-Hope performed together. It was stylistically a stand-out, with hard-hitting raps and

darkly emotional lyrics.

Another highlight of the night was *Singularity*, performed by V.

His husky voice was perfect for the slow, languid song. He recreated the choreography from the music video – where he slips one arm into the sleeve of a suit jacket hung on a rack and mimics a two-person dance with the other arm.

BTS – short for Bangtan Sonyeondan, or Bulletproof Boy Scouts – knew exactly what to do to hype fans up.

Jimin casually belted out a verse of his latest release during the talking segment at the end of the concert to deafening cheers from fans.

During performances, the group

threw water onto fans, delighting them, and struck funny poses at official cameras, which were then projected onto a bigscreen.

Light sticks purchased by the audience pulsed and changed colours according to the beat. And towards the end of the gig, the lightsticks spelt "Singapore" across a section of the audience.

Off-the-cuff moments – such as Jimin jumping up with a sheepish smile after taking a fall during *DNA* (2017); Jungkook giving his microphone to fans to sing along during *Magic Shop* (2018); and Jin and V dancing up a storm during *So What* (2018) – gave fans more reason to scream.

Buy tickets for gigs Down Under on new portal

Australian events giant TEG rolls out Ticketek Singapore, which will sell tickets for concerts here as well as overseas

Eddino Abdul Hadi
Music Correspondent

One of Australia's largest live entertainment companies, TEG, is ramping up its presence in Singapore, promising to offer more options to live entertainment and sports fans here.

It is launching a new ticketing portal, Ticketek Singapore, today that is set to rival those of other major ticketing companies such as Sistic, SportsHub Tix and Apactix.

The company, which brought in Canadian crooner Michael Buble in 2015 and wrestling event WWE Live in 2017, is set to announce more events in the coming months.

Mr Geoff Jones, the company's chief executive officer, told The Straits Times in a telephone interview that he has plans to make Singapore its Asia-Pacific hub.

Ticketek Singapore will list not just local concerts and events, but also those in Malaysia, the Philippines, Australia and New Zealand. More countries will be added in the future.

Through its website, gig-goers may, for example, buy tickets to rapper Post Malone and rock veterans Eagles' concerts in Australia, as well as the HSBC Sydney 7s rugby tournament.

It is also organising a contest where those who sign up for a Ticketek Singapore account may win a trip to watch rap star Eminem at his Sydney concert on Feb 22.

Mr Jones says: "In 2019, we will have quite a broad range of acts come to Singapore. We have a lot of



TEG chief executive Geoff Jones (above) aims to offer more live entertainment options in Singapore. In 2017, his company staged wrestling event WWE Live Singapore, which NXT Women's Champion Asuka (left) took part in. PHOTOS: WWE, TEG

plans for the big global tours we have the rights for."

One of its live events companies, TEG Dainty, was listed at No. 14 in Billboard's 2018 list of top-selling promoters worldwide. In the past year, the company has staged in Australia concerts by major acts such as Queen + Adam Lambert, Katy Perry and Bon Jovi.

TEG joins other players in the Singapore live events industry that includes global companies such as Live Nation and AEG, as well as home-grown promoters such as

Lushington and LAMC.

Mr Jones adds that his company is actively taking steps to counter scalpers and scammers, long a bugbear in the concert industry worldwide.

In a recent example, scalpers are reselling sold-out tickets to John Mayer's debut concert in Singapore on April 1 at inflated prices online.

The police also recently announced that last year, there were more than 200 reports of concert and event ticket scams worth at least \$89,000.

Mr Jones says: "Ultimately, we hope consumers are not bamboozled by resellers who are trying to rip them off. We will make sure, the best we can, to eradicate scalpers."

Those who bought tickets from unauthorised sources will get their tickets invalidated, for example. The company also takes steps to counter bots, or automated programmes, used by scalpers.

In November, the company launched Ticketek Marketplace in Australia. It is a secondary ticket marketplace which promises an

"ethical ticket exchange" for Ticketek customers who have unwanted tickets. They are allowed to resell them at a maximum price of only 10 per cent above the ticket's original value. There are plans to launch a similar service here.

Mr Jones also says that TEG's ticket prices will be "competitive".

"We are heavily attuned to the market, we have our own data analytics company that is attuned to what the market dynamics are."

dinohadi@sph.com.sg

Catch Sara Ali Khan at Indian Expo at Suntec

Desiree Loh



PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Fresh off her silver-screen debut last year, rising Bollywood actress Sara Ali Khan (right) is set to lend a dose of star power to the Singapore International Indian Expo 2019 at Suntec Singapore.

Celebrity appearances have been a highlight of the expo every year, with Bollywood actors Vidya Balan and Manoj Bajpayee attending previously.

Currently in its ninth year and part of the inaugural India Week, the four-day event will start on Thursday.

More than 120 exhibitors will be showcasing their products, including foodstuffs such as spices, ayurvedic products and costume jewellery from India and the region.

On Friday, Khan will interact with attendees from 6 to 8pm. Five lucky fans who register on the festival website will also get a chance to interact with the Kedar-nath (2018) leading lady during a meet-and-greet session.

There will also be workshops for children, including a robot-building and racing session held by Future Ready Academy.

The festival is organised by tabla! and Tamil Murasu in conjunction with events management company De Ideaz.

BOOK IT / SINGAPORE INTERNATIONAL INDIAN EXPO
.....
WHERE: Halls 403 and 404, Suntec Singapore Convention & Exhibition Centre, 1 Raffles Boulevard
.....
WHEN: Thursday to Sunday, 10am to 9pm
.....
ADMISSION: Free
.....
INFO: www.siiexpo.com

Rihanna and LVMH may be making history with fashion deal

NEW YORK • Is Rihanna (right) the Coco Chanel of the 21st century? LVMH Moët Hennessy Louis Vuitton, the parent company of Dior, Givenchy and Fendi, apparently thinks so.

It is in the midst of a deal to back her in a fashion brand, making her the first female designer of colour at the world's largest luxury conglomerate.

Neither LVMH nor Rihanna would comment, although the singer has recently been photographed wearing a "mystery" pair of oversized Fenty-branded square sunglasses, hinting at what may be to come. While the details of the agreement remain unclear, it is a turning point in fashion and fame.

The combination of Fenty and LVMH will be the clearest expression yet of how celebrity, social media and influencers have redefined the power balance between culture and consumption, changing the way brands of all kinds relate to their audience.

It is not insignificant that despite the number of well-known and respected designers unemployed in

the fashion world, including Alber Elbaz, Stefano Pilati and Peter Copping, the dominant luxury group decided to put its money where a pop star was.

Robin Rihanna Fenty, one of the defining musical artists of the millennium and a multi-hyphenate talent, has no formal fashion training. What she does have are a clear vision for her own image, 14 No. 1 singles on the Billboard 100 chart and more than 50 Top 40 hits, 67 million Instagram followers and an ability to disrupt the status quo.

Now that the elite fashion world is in disarray, splintered by the rise of the street, direct communication and a growing awareness of its lack of diversity, there is little wonder that LVMH would see in Rihanna a potential way forward.

Unlike most new designers, however, she has a public profile that is as fully formed and global as any heritage brand.

Other celebrities have made the move into fashion, using the red carpet as a springboard to legitimacy. But what has set them apart, whether it is Victoria Beckham or

Mary-Kate and Ashley Olsen at The Row, is that they have done so in part by renouncing their low-culture past and humbly pledging their troth to design.

By contrast, Rihanna, who starred in last summer's Ocean's 8, appears to understand how her various platforms and outlets for expression can complement one another and shows no interest in abandoning any of them. LVMH has presumably not asked her to.

There are still outstanding questions around just what shape her brand will take, where it will be based and how the relationship with LVMH will be structured. Even what it will be named.

But what is certain is that Rihanna's first catwalk show or extravaganza or concert or whatever it turns out to be will be appointment viewing far beyond the often insular fashion world.

And she now has the potential to set not only style trends, but also a trend in what managers, agents, executives and kids thinking about their future imagine is possible.

NYTIMES



thenewpaper

Hed Chef

Hedy Khoo whips up traditional meals in easy-to-follow recipes

The best ingredients
tnp.sg/lifestyle

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The magic of The Sound of Music in Austria

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THE STRAITS TIMES **SGTRAVELLERS**

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David Rocco was in Singapore as part of the #OurHawker Culture campaign organised by National Geographic and the Ministry of Communications and Information. ST PHOTO: LIM YAOHUI

High jinks and nostalgia to usher in new year

REVIEW / CONCERT

RHAPSODIES OF SPRING 2019
Singapore Chinese Orchestra
Singapore Conference Hall
Last Saturday

Chang Tou Liang

Like Singapore Symphony Orchestra's annual Christmas Concerts, Singapore Chinese Orchestra's Chinese New Year concerts, titled Rhapsodies Of Spring, are must-attend events for those who enjoy seasonal favourites delivered with healthy doses of light-heartedness.

Conducted by Yeh Tsung, this year's offerings were high on humour and nostalgia. The concert opened with Li Huan Zhi's familiar Spring Festival Overture, an old-fashioned rouser which sounded oh-so traditional before SCO composer-on-residence Law Wai Lun's Celebrating New Year.

There was a deliberate schlockiness to this medley which reeked of gaudy Geylang a-go-go bars of the 1960s. More power to a smart parody of styles which saw Cai Shen Dao (God Of Fortune Arrives) and Ying Chun Hua (Spring Blossoms) dressed up as a rumba and cha cha respectively. And one has not really lived without experiencing that ear-worm Gong Xi Gong Xi taking the form of a ridiculously camp tango.

What truly distinguished the evening were four world premieres of Chinese evergreens re-orchestrated as popular culture-influenced concertante works by four local composers.

Simon Kong's Flight Of Bossa Nova saw Chang Le and Meng Jie in a duel of suonas updating the woodwind classic Bai Niao Chao Feng (Hundreds Of Birds Paying Respect To The Phoenix).

There were many jazzy turns to erhu classic Erquan Yingyue (Moon's Reflection On Erquan) in Phang Kok Jun's Erquan In Swing. Tan Man Man's hip-grating solo was the perfect foil to Ling Hock Siang's reliving of the legendary blind erhu exponent Abing's soulful plaint.

In Wang Chenwei's Interstellar Ambush, the pipa showpiece Shi Mian Mai Fu (Ambush From All Sides) took on the ominous strides of Darth Vader's Imperial March. The always spectacular Yu Jia in a multi-sequenced gown did the honours, but something was lost by not being dressed like a stormtrooper.

For Hard Rock Fight, Eric Watson pitted two percussionists, Xu Fan on Chinese drums (dagu and paigu) against Ngho Keng Seng on timpanis, in a pitched battle where Long Hu Dou (Dragon Tiger Feud) was transformed into a rock fantasy.

Art or kitsch? The side-splitting in-jokes in these four new works meant they were not to be taken too seriously.

After the first half's high jinks, the second half was more retrospective and sedate. Heady Shanghai of the 1930s was relived with Fang Qiong in a selection of songs popularised by singer-actress Zhou Xuan in Law's The Wandering Songstress Symphonic Suite.

She certainly had the full measure of these numbers, which included Song Of Four Seasons, Waiting For A Beloved, May Breezes and Soaring Phoenix.

Conductor Yeh was in his element too, reciting poetry in both Mandarin and antique Shanghainese, performing dance steps and even downing a glass of red wine.

Had the audience been similarly stimulated, there would have been a more raucous response to Sim Boon Yew's Spring Suite 2019, which closed the concert with the customary glad tidings of gong xi, gong xi.

To David Rocco, durian is death

The Canadian TV show host and celebrity chef threw away a box of the fruit because of its smell

Eunice Quek Food Correspondent

You would think that Canadian TV show host and celebrity chef David Rocco has pretty much seen it all. After all, the seasoned globetrotter explores the diverse cultures and cuisine of various destinations, from Italy to India to Ethiopia in his shows.

Yet, he is still prone to the occasional "tourist faux pas".

During the peak lunch hour at Amoy Street Food Centre, he pushed a packet of tissues away from a table, only to realise it was meant to reserve the table. And at East Coast Lagoon Food Village, he asked for hot sauce to accompany his satay, instead of the quintessential peanut sauce.

Rocco, 49, says candidly: "People were horrified with my request for hot sauce. But I feel that the peanut sauce covers up the flavour of the meat. Peanut sauce was important

last time because satay was made with odd cuts of meat and so the sauce covers up the smell. I guess my version requires hot sauce."

Calling his time here an "intense food odyssey", Rocco was in town last week as part of the #OurHawkerCulture campaign organised by National Geographic and the Ministry of Communications and Information. The jointly launched #OurHawkerCulture movement is in support of Singapore's nomination for Hawker Culture on the UNESCO Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage.

He is also a judge for the #OurHawkerCulture photography contest which runs till Jan 27. To participate, members of the public can post photographs that represent what makes them proud about Singapore's hawker culture on Instagram.

Rocco also filmed a vignette series with Makansutra founder KF Seetoh, which delves into the food and heritage of Singapore's hawker

culture in a timespan of 12 hours, slated to air in March.

"I was completely immersed in the hawker culture and learning about generations of hawkers. You get such quality of food and I'm amazed at the efficiency of the stall owners to pump out food within a two-hour window for busy professionals," says Rocco, whose wife

Nina, 50, works with him as an executive producer. They have 10-year-old twin daughters and a seven-year-old son.

Born in Rome, Italy, to hairdresser parents, Rocco was raised in Toronto, Canada, where he is still based. The cookbook author is best known for his TV series David Rocco's Dolce Vita and, more recently, Dolce India, Dolce Napoli, and Dolce Africa. Last year, he teamed up with Hong Kong singer Nicholas Tse for Celebrity Chef: East Vs West – a show where they competed with each other to cook the local food of the destination they visited.

Besides working on a new book this year, Rocco will return to Southeast Asia for a new TV series, which will highlight Singapore, Malaysia, Cambodia, Vietnam and Thailand.

He says: "I've done 180 shows and they used to focus more on cooking. Now, we delve into the people and culture. Our last series on Italy is not about pizza or pasta anymore. It's about people helping migrants and chefs working with NGOs on boats to open restaurants for migrants. It's about people who have been in jail and how restaurants in the jail are open to the public so that they can learn skills. Food not only has the power to bring people together, but it can also rehabilitate."

He remains upbeat and energetic throughout the interview with The Straits Times at Tiong Bahru Market, where he snaps photographs of the wonton mee for his social media accounts (@davidroccosvita) on Twitter and Instagram.

And as he chats about training his children to be adventurous foodies

like himself, Rocco also sheepishly admits that he is "not a fan of durian".

Recalling an incident 10 years ago, when he first came to Singapore and was given durian by a journalist, he says: "After the journalist left, I opened the box of durian, it stank and I threw it away without closing the lid. My publicist and I ran out of the hotel because we didn't want to get into trouble."

And although he eventually tried durian in Malaysia last year, he adds firmly: "To me, durian is death. I would place durian and balut (developing duck embryo) on the same platter and I'd rather eat the latter."

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• For more information on the #OurHawkerCulture contest, go to www.whatmakesg.com.

• Follow Eunice Quek on Twitter @STEuniceQ

A fitting celebration of SSO's 40th anniversary

REVIEW / CONCERT

SSO 40TH ANNIVERSARY GALA
Singapore Symphony Orchestra
Esplanade Concert Hall
Last Friday

Chang Tou Liang

Almost 40 years ago to the week, the Singapore Symphony Orchestra (SSO) performed its first concerts at Singapore Conference Hall, led by founding music director Choo Hoey.

The orchestra then numbered 41 musicians, but gave the 1979 audience an inkling of what professional music-making in Singapore was to become.

At its 40th anniversary, present music director Shui Lan helmed a programme that paid tribute to those inaugural concerts.

Two works were reprised. The first was 20th-century American composer Charles Ives' The Unanswered Question. Its inclusion by Choo was symbolic and rhetorical, as if pondering on an uncertain fu-

ture of classical music in Singapore or the orchestra for that matter.

That question has, however, been emphatically answered many times over.

Classical music, especially orchestral music, thrives in Singapore today. Even young amateur groups of music-makers now sound more accomplished than the SSO of the early 1980s.

The short mysterious senses. Muted strings were challenged by David Smith's trumpet perched high up in the organ loft. This conversation of crossed purposes was interjected by the chatter of a flute quartet, with all involved left none the wiser. Such was the intent of the iconoclastic Ives.

More down to earth was the second reprised work, Beethoven's Fifth Piano Concerto, popularly known as the Emperor for its sweeping grandeur.

Lim Yan, the first Singaporean to perform all five Beethoven piano concertos here as a cycle, was the ideal soloist. That he got every note down pat was a given.

His projection of unruffled authority, full-blooded tone and a sheer sense of joy that radiated through its three movements made this a most rewarding outing.

The concert's opening work was also the first Singaporean work performed by the fledgling SSO.

Dayong Sampan by the late Leong Yoon Pin, considered the father of Singaporean composition, was a heady fusion of Western and Eastern idioms.

Amid a commotion of brass fanfares and buzzing strings, the emergence of the Malay melody on solo oboe represented a quintessential Singaporean musical moment. Like the year 1965, this 1980 composition has rightly become a landmark and an icon.

If the first half sounded promising, the second was even better.

Shui had replaced Schubert's Unfinished Symphony (another symbolic choice of Choo's) with Beethoven's Seventh Symphony. The faster tempos he adopted were close to perfect as there were no moments for the music to lag.

Even the first movement's slow in-



Musicians Lim Shue Chern (left) and Lynnette Seah receiving applause at the SSO 40th-anniversary concert. ST PHOTO: NG SOR LUAN

roduction sounded swift and the second movement's variations unfolded with inexorable purpose.

As if to demonstrate the orchestra's prowess, the final two move-

ments were taken at a breathless pace and the effect was thrilling. Just as the symphony clocked in under 40 minutes, SSO's 40 years has felt like a breeze.

Comics

BABY BLUES



GARFIELD



Free to air

CHANNEL 5

AM
6.00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 15 (HD) (PG) (V)
6.45 Just For Laughs Gags 17 (HD) (V)
7.00 First Look Asia (Simulcast From CNA) (CA)
9.00 The Dr Oz Show 10 (PG) (IE)
10.00 The \$100,000 Pyramid (PG) (V)
10.30 Everyday Gourmet 3 (HD) (IE)
11.00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 16 (PG) (V)
PM
12.00 Martha Bakes 6 (IE)
12.30 Secret Meat Business (IE)
1.00 Films & Stars (PG) (V)
1.30 Kin (PG) (CC) (D)
2.00 Phua Chu Kang Pte Ltd 4 (SC)
2.30 Super Mum Super Dad (HD) (V)
3.00 The Dr Oz Show 10 (PG) (IE)
4.00 Make You Laugh Out Loud 3 (PG) (V)
4.30 America's Got Talent 12 (HD) (PG) (V)
5.30 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 16 (PG) (V)
6.30 The \$100,000 Pyramid (PG) (V)
7.00 Wheel Of Fortune 36 (CC) (V)
7.30 Little Big Shots US 3 (CC) (V)
8.30 Kin (HD) (PG) (CC) (D)
9.00 News 5
9.30 Weird Food Diaries (HD) (PG) (IE) (Finale)
10.00 Avenue 14 (PG13) (CC) (D)
11.00 Grimm 6 (PG13) (D)
AM
12.00 Kin (PG) (CC) (D)
12.30 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 16 (PG) (V)
1.20 This Is Us (HD) (PG) (D)
2.10 Euromaxx (Cul)
2.40 Arts 21 (PG) (Cul)
3.10 Plastic Surgery Is My Business (PG) (IE)
3.40 Everyday Gourmet 3 (HD) (IE)
4.10 Martha Bakes 6 (IE)
4.40 Secret Meat Business (IE)
5.10 The Dr Oz Show 10 (PG) (IE)

CHANNEL 8

AM
6.00 3-Plus-14 (V)
7.00 Tuesday Report – Ninety Years Young (CC) (IE)
7.30 Hello Singapore Highlights (CA)

8.00 Heart To Heart (PG) (CC) (D)
9.00 Morning Express (CA)
9.30 Jalan Jalan (PG) (CC) (D)
10.00 Food And Beverage Investigators 8 (IE)
10.30 Night Market Life Aka. Life (PG) (D)
PM
12.30 Body SOS 7 (CC) (V)
1.00 News 8 At One
1.30 Focus (CC) (CA)
2.00 Beijing Opera Cats (S)
2.30 Your Hand In Mine (HD) (CC) (D) (Finale)
3.30 The Golden Path (CC) (D)
4.30 Taste Of Life (PG) (D)
5.30 118 Reunion (PG) (CC) (D)
6.30 Hello Singapore (CA)
7.30 Jalan Jalan (PG) (CC) (D)
8.00 Old Taste Detective (CC) (IE)
9.00 Heart To Heart (PG) (CC) (D)
10.00 News Tonight
10.30 Incredible Tales 8 (HD) (PG13) (CC) (D)
11.00 Princess Agents (PG) (D)
AM
12.00 The Princess Weiyoung (PG) (D)
1.00 Super Taste 12 (V)
2.00 A Time To Dance (D)
4.00 A Place Called Home (PG) (D)

CHANNEL U

PM
3.00 Markets In Asia (CC) (IE)
4.00 Find Me A Singaporean 3 (IE)
5.00 Cheongdamdong Scandal (PG) (CC) (D)
6.00 The Menu (PG) (CC) (D)
7.00 My Father Is Strange (PG) (CC) (D)
9.00 Blue Tick (PG) (CC) (D)
10.00 Brother's Keeper 2 (PG13) (CC) (D)
11.00 News Tonight
11.30 Blue Tick (PG) (CC) (D)
AM
12.30 My Father Is Strange (PG) (CC) (D)
2.30 Close

CNA

AM
6.00 Singapore Tonight
6.30 Money Mind
7.00 First Look Asia
9.00 Asia Business First
10.02 Real Deal
11.00 News Now

PM
1.02 Cool Living In An Eco-City
2.00 News Now
4.02 Edible Wild
4.30 Made In Singapore
5.00 News Now
7.02 Cool Living In An Eco-City (CC)
8.00 Primetime Asia
9.02 Into The Vault (CC)
10.00 Singapore Tonight
11.02 Cool Living In An Eco-City
AM
12.00 News Now
12.30 Money Mind
1.02 Into The Vault
2.00 News Now
2.30 Once A Refugee
3.02 Edible Wild
3.30 Made In Singapore
4.00 News Now
4.30 Once A Refugee
5.02 Into The Vault
Programmes may be pre-empted by breaking news

VASANTHAM

PM
3.00 Super Samayal 4
3.30 Azhagiya Snehithi 2
4.00 Sundaram Kudumbathinar
4.30 Enna Nadakuthu 6 (HD)
5.30 Mottu Patlu 3
6.00 Raama Seetha 2
7.00 Konjam Soru Konjam Varalaru 2
7.30 Mella Thiranthatu Katavu 3
8.00 Uyire (PG)
8.30 Tamil Seithi (News)
9.00 Ms V Supreme 2019
10.00 Rowthiram
10.30 Bayam
11.00 Nyabagam Varuthae 3
11.30 Tamil Seithi (News) (R)

AM
12.00 Close

OKTO

AM
9.00 Twirlywoos (P)
9.30 Teddies (P)
10.00 Doki (P)
10.30 Sesame Street (HD) (P)
11.00 Peppa Pig (P)
11.30 Andy's Prehistoric Adventures (P)

PM
12.00 Bugsville (P)
12.30 Teddies (P)
1.00 Coconut The Little Dragon (P)
1.30 Twirlywoos (P)
2.00 Doki (P)
2.30 Sesame Street (P)
3.00 Peppa Pig (P)
3.30 Andy's Prehistoric Adventures (P)
4.00 Odd Squad (HD) (S)
4.30 Captain Flinn And The Pirate Dinosaurs (S)
5.00 Littlest Pet Shop (S)
5.30 Marcus Level (S)
6.00 The Lion Guard (P)
6.30 Basic Mini-tary Training (S)
7.00 Escape From Mr Lemoncello's Library (CC) (M)
8.20 Minuscule 2 (HD) (S)
8.30 Inazuma Eleven (CC) (S)
9.00 ATP 250: ASB Classic Auckland 2019 (Sports) / 11.00 American Ninja Warrior 6 (HD) (PG) (Sports)
AM
12.00 Close

SURIA

PM
3.00 Juxbox Ekspres
4.00 Seindah Takdir Cinta (PG) (D)
5.00 Setia Menunggumu (PG) (CC) (D)
6.00 BoBoiBoy Galaxy (S)
6.30 E.A.T. (CC) (IE)
7.00 Teratai Kemboja (PG) (CC) (D)
8.00 Berita (News)
8.30 Reka (CC) (IE)
9.30 Mak Cun 4 (PG) (CC) (D)
10.30 Alam Maya (PG) (CC) (D)
11.30 Berita (News) (R)
AM
12.00 Close

C: Children; CA: Current Affairs;
CC: Closed Captions; Cul: Culture;
D: Drama; IE: Info-Ed; M: Movies;
P: Preschool; PG: Parental Guidance;
R: Repeat; S: Schoolkids; SC: Sitcom;
V: Variety

Programme schedules correct at time of printing. Telecast details from Mediacorp, StarHub and Singtel TV. For pay TV updates, go to www.starhub.com/tv or www.singtelv.com.sg

PM
2.10 In The Heart Of The Sea
4.25 Friends 9/4.50 Supergirl 2
5.40 Top 20 Funniest
6.30 The Flash 3
7.20 The Big Bang Theory 9
7.45 Friends 9
8.10 Breaking The Magician's Code
9.00 The Conjuring 2
11.25 Final Destination

COMEDY CENTRAL ASIA (HD) (CHANNEL 324)

AM
6.00 At Midnight With Chris Hardwick 2
6.25 The Daily Show 24
6.50 Just For Laughs Gags 12
7.15 Kids Do The Craziest Things
7.40 Mr Bean
8.10 Your Face Or Mine 4
8.30 Most Ridiculous 2
8.55 Billy On The Street 5
9.15 Takeshi's Castle 4
9.40 Mr Bean
10.10 Most Ridiculous 2
10.35 Almost Royals 2
11.05 Saturday Night Live 43
11.50 The Daily Show 24
PM
12.20 The Relationship Show
1.10 Just For Laughs Gags 14
1.35 Inside Comedy 2
2.35 Mr Bean
3.05 Takeshi's Castle 4
3.30 Most Ridiculous 2
3.55 Almost Royals 2
4.20 Lip Sync Battle 4
5.10 Hood Adjacent With James Davis
5.35 The Jim Jefferies Show
6.00 The Daily Show 24
6.25 Caraoke Showdown
6.45 Above Average Presents
6.55 Your Face Or Mine 4
7.20 Most Ridiculous 2
7.45 Billy On The Street 5
8.10 Takeshi's Castle 4
8.35 Just For Laughs Gags 14
9.05 Caraoke Showdown
9.30 Stand-up, Asia! 2
10.30 Inside Amy Schumer
10.55 The Fuccons
11.00 The Jim Jefferies Show
11.25 The Fuccons
11.30 The Daily Show 24
11.54 The Fuccons

JIA LE (HD) (CHANNEL 502)

AM
6.00 Chronicle Of Love
7.00 First Love
8.00 Entrepreneurial Age
9.00 Eagle And Youngster
10.00 100% Wife
PM
12.10 First Love
1.00 In The Name Of Love
2.00 100% Wife
4.10 Entrepreneurial Age
5.00 First Love
6.00 In The Name Of Love
7.00 100% Wife
9.10 First Love
10.00 Entrepreneurial Age
11.00 Eagle And Youngster

Singtel TV

CARTOON NETWORK (CHANNEL 226)

AM
6.00 Oggy & The Cockroaches
7.00 The Tom And Jerry Show
8.00 Teen Titans Go!
9.00 Grizzly And The Lemmings
9.30 The Tom And Jerry Show
10.00 We Bare Bears
10.30 Supernooobs
11.00 The Powerpuff Girls
PM
12.00 Teen Titans Go!
1.00 We Bare Bears
2.00 Ninjago: Masters Of Spinjitzu
2.30 The Powerpuff Girls
3.00 Running Man Animation
3.30 The Amazing World Of Gumball
4.00 We Bare Bears
4.30 The Powerpuff Girls
5.00 Teen Titans Go!
5.30 Ben 10
6.00 Oggy & The Cockroaches
6.30 Running Man Animation
7.00 The Tom And Jerry Show
7.30 Grizzly And The Lemmings
8.00 We Bare Bears
9.00 The Powerpuff Girls
10.00 Regular Show
10.30 Steven Universe
11.00 Clarence
11.30 Adventure Time

AXN (HD) (CHANNEL 304)

AM
6.00 Killjoys 3
6.45 Kicking & Screaming
7.35 The Blacklist 5
8.25 MacGyver
9.15 American Ninja Warrior 8
10.05 Killjoys 3
10.55 Caught On Camera With Nick Cannon 2
11.45 Kicking & Screaming
PM
12.35 MacGyver
1.25 Quantico 2
2.15 American Ninja Warrior 8
3.05 Killjoys 3
3.55 The Blacklist 5
4.45 MacGyver
5.35 American Ninja Warrior 8
6.25 Instinct
7.15 Kicking & Screaming
8.05 Caught On Camera With Nick Cannon 2
9.45 Hawaii Five-0 9
10.35 MacGyver 3
11.25 Hawaii Five-0 9

WARNER TV (HD) (CHANNEL 306)

AM
6.00 IZombie 4
6.50 Top 20 Funniest
7.40 Major Crimes
8.30 Supergirl 2
9.20 The Flash 3
10.10 IZombie 4
11.00 Gotham 5
11.50 Batman

StarHub TV

HISTORY (CHANNEL 401)

AM
7.35 Forged In Fire 5
8.30 American Ripper
9.30 The God Code / 11.20 Mountain Men 7
PM
12.15 Football's Greatest Moments
1.10 The Pickers 12 / 2.05 Pawn Stars 18
2.35 Forged In Fire 5
3.30 The God Code
5.20 American Ripper
6.15 The Pickers 11
7.10 Counting Cars 5
8.05 Storage Wars: Texas 6
8.30 Storage Wars 10
9.00 The Cars That Made America
10.50 History Drama: Vikings 5
11.45 Football's Greatest Moments

LIFETIME (CHANNEL 514)

AM
7.00 Man Vs Child: Chef Showdown
8.00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 16
9.00 Scraps / 10.00 Seatbelt Psychic
11.00 Zoo 3
PM
12.00 Dance Moms 6
1.00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 16
2.00 And Baby Will Fall
3.35 The Rap Game 3
4.30 Little Women LA: Terra's Little Family
5.00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 16
6.00 Idol Moms
7.00 Live PD Presents: Women On Patrol
8.00 Leah Remini: Scientology & The Aftermath
9.00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 16
10.00 A Tale Of Two Coreys
11.35 Idol Moms

HBO (CHANNEL 601)

AM
7.50 Hugo
10.00 True Detective 3 (NC16)
11.00 Crashing 3 (NC16)
11.30 It's Complicated (NC16)
PM
1.30 A Bigger Splash (NC16)
3.25 Nacho Libre
4.55 Alvin And The Chipmunks: Chipwrecked / 6.20 Inside Out
7.55 The Matrix Revolutions
10.00 True Detective 3 (NC16)
11.00 Crashing 3 (NC16)
11.30 High Maintenance 3 (M18)

CINEMAX (CHANNEL 611)

AM
7.00 The HBO Movie Show
7.25 You Don't Know Jack (NC16)
9.40 Dracula
11.30 Big Momma's House 2 (NC16)
PM
1.10 Bulletproof Monk
2.55 Howard The Duck
4.45 First Time Felon
6.30 Knight Rider 2000
8.05 The Art Of War
10.00 Hollywood Homicide
11.55 Strike Back 5 (NC16)

HUB E CITY (CHANNEL 825)

AM
7.00 Tomorrow With You (HD)
8.15 Hot Door Night XV (HD)
9.15 Dowry (HD)
10.15 Unlimited Song Season (HD)
PM
12.15 The Gentlemen Of Wolgyesu Tailor Shop (HD)
1.30 Tomorrow With You (HD)
2.45 Where Are We Going, Dad? 5 (HD)
4.45 The Gentlemen Of Wolgyesu Tailor Shop (HD) / 6.00 Dowry (HD)
7.00 Hot Door Night XVI (HD)
8.00 Perfect Dating VI (HD)
9.30 Hong Kong Neighbourhood Gems (HD) / 10.00 Noble Aspirations (HD)
11.00 Hot Door Night XVI (HD)

HUB SPORTS 1 (CHANNEL 201)

AM
7.00 Tennis: ATP 1000 Rogers Cup Presented By National Bank 2018 Day 5 Quarter-finals / 11.30 Tennis: ATP 1000 Rogers Cup Presented By National Bank 2018 Day 5 Quarter-finals 2
PM
3.30 Tennis: ATP 250 Tata Open Maharashtra 2019 Semi-finals
8.00 Table Tennis: Seamaster 2019 ITTF World Tour Hungarian Open: Women's Semi-finals, Men's Quarter-finals And Mixed Doubles Finals

HUB SPORTS 2 (CHANNEL 202)

AM
7.00 WWE Afterburn (PG)
8.00 Asean Basketball League 2018/19 Hong Kong Eastern Basketball Team Vs Formosa Dreamers (Same Day Delayed)
10.00 Asean Basketball League 2018/19 Macau Black Bears Vs Zhuhai Wolf Warriors (Same Day Delayed)
PM
12.00 Magazine: Omnisport.TV
12.30 Asean Basketball League 2018/19 CLS Knights Indonesia Vs Singapore Slingers
2.30 Football: EFL Championship 2018 Matchday 28 Swansea City Vs Sheffield United
4.30 National Basketball League Round 14 Cairns Taipans Vs New Zealand Breakers (Live) / 6.30 Football: Coppa Italia 2018/19 Highlights
7.00 Fiba World Basketball 2019
7.30 Magazine: Omnisport.TV
8.00 Wrestling: WWE Experience (PG)
9.00 Football: Supercoppa Italiana 2018/19
9.30 Asean Basketball League 2018/19 Saigon Heat Vs Westports Malaysia Dragons
11.30 Magazine: Omnisport.TV
AM
12.00 National Basketball League Round 14 Cairns Taipans Vs New Zealand Breakers
2.00 Magazine: Omnisport.TV
2.30 Magazine: Trans World Sport 2019
3.30 Magazine: Spartan Barcelona 2018
4.00 Football: EFL Championship 2018 Matchday 28 Bolton Wanderers Vs West Bromwich Albion (Live)

TheStarsSay

Aries (March 21 - April 19)
Your inner strength is on display and you can make a real impression on the world.

Taurus (April 20 - May 20)
Your struggle with a friend or colleague is getting out of hand. Try to take the long view.

Gemini (May 21 - June 20)
Get to work on that one hot idea. Things are getting interesting, so see if you can ride the wave all the way.

Cancer (June 21 - July 22)
Keep shopping until you find a deal you can live with. There is no need to say yes to a bad buy.

Leo (July 23 - Aug 22)
Your positive attitude helps people to see that you are not just saying no to hear your own voice.

Virgo (Aug 23 - Sept 22)
Loosen up. You are sure to be held back if you insist on doing things the same old way.

Libra (Sept 23 - Oct 22)
Forget all about the details of today's big project and instead get in touch with how it makes you feel.

Scorpio (Oct 23 - Nov 21)
Be extra careful as things are weirder than usual. Get your friends to watch out for you.

Sagittarius (Nov 22 - Dec 21)
Your positive energy is back and you should be able to make the most of almost any situation.

Capricorn (Dec 22 - Jan 19)
You need to make a tough choice, but you know you have to do what is right.

Aquarius (Jan 20 - Feb 18)
Mess around with new ways of doing things. It is a good time to explore far beyond your usual haunts.

Pisces (Feb 19 - March 20)
Avoid the office drama. Even if you are not working, you can get dragged in, thanks to colleagues.

• Provided by Astrology.com (www.astrology.com)

Radio

KISS92

AM
6.00 Maddy, Jason & Arnold In The Morning
10.00 Carol Smith
PM
1.00 Charmaine Yee
4.00 Shan Wee
8.00 Josh's Goodnight Kiss

ONE FM 91.3

AM
6.00 ONE FM's #1 Breakfast Show With Glenn And The Flying Dutchman
10.00 Cheryl Miles
PM
4.00 Weekdays With ONE FM

MONEY FM 89.3

AM
6.00 The Breakfast Huddle With Elliott Danker, Yasmin Jonkers & Ryan Huang
10.00 Midday With Howie Lim
PM
2.00 Prime Time With Claessa Monteiro
4.00 The Curve With Michelle Martin & Bernard Lim

UFM100.3

AM
6.00 UFM100.3 Mornings With Wenhong, Limei & Xiaozhu
10.00 Lively Life With Kemlin
PM
1.00 Tea With Yuling
4.00 Sing-a-long With Xinying & Weilong
8.00 Feel The Night With Chengyao

96.3 HAO FM

AM
6.00 Morning Drive Time With Jing Yun, De Ming And Jie Qi
10.00 Lunch Break With Anna
PM
1.00 Automation
4.00 Evening Drive Time With Li Yi And Guo Xian
8.00 Night Time With Wei Wen

Tides

SUN RISE/SET TIME: 7.15am/7.18pm
MOON RISE/SET TIME: 7.31pm/7.02am

TIDES TODAY: Singapore: 4.43am (1.6m), 10.37am (3.2m), 5.11pm (0.2m). Desaru: 4.41am (1.9m), 9.30am (2.7m), 4.35pm (0.4m). Port Dickson: 12.58am (0.1m), 6.43am (2.8m), 1.59pm (0.5m), 7.18pm (2.5m). Mersing: 4.40am (2m), 8.55am (2.5m), 3.56pm (0.6m), 11.22pm (3.5m).

TIDES TOMORROW: Singapore: 12.28am (3m), 5.35am (1.5m), 11.24am (3.3m), 6.01pm (0.2m). Desaru: 12.03am (3m), 5.26am (1.9m), 10.24am (2.7m), 5.24pm (0.4m). Port Dickson: 1.53am (0.1m), 7.26am (2.8m), 2.47pm (0.3m), 8.05pm (2.7m). Mersing: 5.29am (1.9m), 9.52am (2.5m), 4.49pm (0.5m).

For updates and more details, call Meteorological Service Singapore, NEA, on 6542-7788 or go to www.nea.gov.sg

Hit zombie comedy had real-life problems on set

Yip Wai Yee
Entertainment Correspondent

Part of what makes hit Japanese zombie comedy *One Cut Of The Dead* (2017) so funny is the number of ridiculous problems that the film-making crew in the story runs into while trying to shoot a movie – an actor gets drunk, equipment breaks down and lines are forgotten.

It turns out that in real life, writer-director Shinichiro Ueda had his fair share of issues to tackle.

In an e-mail interview with *The Straits Times*, the 34-year-old says: “There were many real troubles happening on the set of the movie, such

as ‘blood’ splashing onto the camera.

“We had to have a determined cast and crew to fight these problems together in order to complete the movie.”

One Cut Of The Dead, which opened the Japanese Film Festival here last Friday, is a comedy about a team struggling to shoot a zombie film in an abandoned building. When a real zombie apocalypse happens, the crazed director (played by Takayuki Hamatsu) insists on keeping everyone in the vicinity and letting the cameras roll.

The film’s commercial run in Singapore begins on Thursday.

The reason Ueda, as well as the

film-making team in the story, faced so many problems is because both were trying to shoot very long takes.

In order to nail the 37-minute single take that opens *One Cut Of The Dead*, the cast had to undergo numerous rehearsals. Ueda shot the entire segment on film six times, of which the last version was used.

Even though the film is made on a low budget and stars a cast of unknowns, it was a sleeper hit in Japan, making more than 250 times its production budget of 3 million yen (\$37,200).

It had originally opened only in two theatres in Tokyo in November 2017, but word-of-mouth was so

strong that it expanded to three more theatres in the second week. Even then, it was not enough to meet audience demand.

“That was when I thought, ‘Oh, this is going to be crazy,’” says Ueda.

The film went on to perform well on the film festival circuit as well as commercially in markets such as Hong Kong and Taiwan. On aggregator site *Rotten Tomatoes*, the film is “certified fresh” with a rare 100 per cent rating for being “brainy and bloody in equal measure”.

Ueda says of his directorial debut: “I really didn’t have an overseas market in mind when I made this, so it came as a huge and pleasant surprise that it was enjoyed by audi-

ences around the world.”

The actors in the movie have also become big stars, says the director. Besides Hamatsu, the film also stars Harumi Shuhama, Mao, Yuzuki Akiyama and Manabu Hosoi.

“Most of them were freelancers before the film, but they have since signed with big actor agencies and have gotten other roles too. They are doing so well that not a day goes by without one of them appearing in a drama series, commercial or variety show.”

yipwy@sph.com.sg

• *One Cut Of The Dead* opens on Thursday.



One Cut Of The Dead, a comedy about a crew struggling to shoot a zombie film, had its own troubles while being filmed, such as “blood” splashing onto the camera.
PHOTO: SHAW ORGANISATION

Maho Yamaguchi, a singer with NGT48, alleged she had been assaulted by two fans. PHOTO: INSTAGRAM/NOHOHON.MAHOHON



Outcry over handling of alleged assault on Japanese singer

TOKYO • Japan’s harsh treatment of its female celebrities has again come under scrutiny, following an outcry over the music industry’s handling of an alleged assault on a member of a popular girl band.

Social media users and TV commentators have joined the barrage of criticism targeting AKS, a music management agency, after Maho Yamaguchi, a singer with NGT48, went public this month with allegations she had been assaulted by two obsessive fans at the end of last year.

Yamaguchi, 23, said on Twitter that AKS had failed to help her after the assault, which had left her deeply traumatised.

At the time of her tweet, the agency representing NGT48 – a sis-

ter group to the hugely popular girl band AKB48 – had not commented on the incident.

The furore intensified when Yamaguchi bowed deeply and apologised to fans for “causing trouble” during a concert earlier this month, with many questioning why she felt she should apologise while her industry handlers remained silent.

Her fans responded with a petition calling for NGT48’s manager to resign that was signed by more than 53,000 people.

Yamaguchi’s case has highlighted the poor treatment of young women and girls by Japan’s pop industry, particularly the insistence that they appear morally unimpeachable.

Performers are subject to strict

rules imposed by their management agencies, including, in many cases, a ban on having boyfriends to maintain the impression among their largely male – and, on occasion, dangerously obsessive – fan base that they are romantically available.

In 2013, Minami Minegishi, then a 20-year-old member of AKB48, shaved her head – a traditional act of contrition in Japan – and issued a tearful apology after breaking her group’s strict dating ban to spend a night with her boyfriend.

AKS eventually apologised for its handling of Yamaguchi’s case, claiming it had remained silent throughout her ordeal to allow the police to investigate.

A spokesman said the firm had re-

placed the manager of the theatre in Niigata, northern Japan, regularly used by NGT48, adding that it would step up security around members of the group.

The firm also admitted that a fellow NGT48 member had given the men Yamaguchi’s address and told them when she might return home.

The two men suspected of grabbing Yamaguchi’s face and pinning her to the ground as she was entering her home in Niigata reportedly told police they had simply wanted to talk to her and were released without charge.

NGT48 has cancelled three upcoming concerts in which Yamaguchi was to perform, according to Japanese media.

THE GUARDIAN

RCA Records drops R. Kelly

NEW YORK • R. Kelly – once one of the biggest and most influential stars in pop music – was dropped by his record company, RCA Records, last Friday, in the music industry’s highest-profile casualty of the #Me-Too era.

RCA’s agreement to part ways with Kelly, confirmed by a person briefed on the move who declined to be identified because the deal was confidential, came after weeks of protests.

A recent television documentary, *Surviving R. Kelly*, drew wide attention for its visceral testimonials by women who said that as underage girls they had been lured into sexual relationships with Kelly and abused by him mentally and physically.

Activists who had been calling for his dismissal cheered the decision, while still criticising RCA for its slow pace, and they pushed the entertainment industry to punish him further.

“After years of profiting from R. Kelly, despite their knowledge of his sexual abuse of black girls, Sony’s RCA is finally acting,” Ms Arisha Hatch of the group Color of Change said in a statement.

Accusations of misconduct by Kelly, 52, date to the mid-1990s, when it was revealed that, at 27, he secretly married his 15-year-old protégée, Aaliyah; their marriage certificate falsely listed her age as 18.

Lurid reports of misconduct followed, including accusations from women who said Kelly had sex with them when they were as young as 15.

Kelly, whose real name is Robert Sylvester Kelly, has denied abusing or mistreating any women. Mr Don Russell, who identified himself as the “top adviser” to Kelly, said last Friday other labels were interested in signing Kelly, though he declined to identify them.

Public opinion began to turn against Kelly again in 2017, after an investigation published by *BuzzFeed News* said he had been holding women against their will in an abusive “cult”. Online outrage over that reporting led to a social media campaign, #MuteRKelly.

Terms of his exit deal, including what, if anything, RCA paid him to terminate the contract, were not disclosed. According to the person briefed on the talks, RCA had been discussing the move for months with his legal team, well before the release of the *Lifetime* documentary, but after the #MuteRKelly movement had gained momentum.

Kelly, who won three Grammys in 1998 for his song *I Believe I Can Fly*, has been dogged for years by accusations, but has never been convicted of a crime.

He was acquitted in Chicago on child pornography charges in 2008, in a case that involved a tape that prosecutors said showed him having sex with a 13-year-old girl. But the girl in the video did not testify and Kelly’s lawyers argued that her identity could not be proven.

NYTIMES

On social media



MISSING MILLER: American pop singer Ariana Grande did not forget her late ex-boyfriend Mac Miller’s birthday. Miller, who would have celebrated his 27th birthday last Saturday, died of a drug overdose in September last year. Grande took to Twitter early last Saturday to post a simple message “miss u”, which many fans believed was a tweet for Miller. Later in the day, she posted on her Instagram story two photos of her with Miller. Grande and Miller dated for about two years before they ended their relationship in May last year. She then dated comedian Pete Davidson before the couple called off their engagement and split in October.

PHOTO: INSTAGRAM/ARIANAIGSTORIES

Gladys Knight defends decision to sing US anthem at Super Bowl

LOS ANGELES • Singer Gladys Knight has defended her decision to perform the United States national anthem at the Super Bowl after receiving criticism from supporters of former quarterback Colin Kaepernick, who used the pre-game tradition to protest racial injustice.

Knight, a 74-year-old native of Atlanta, where the game will be played, agreed to sing *The Star-Spangled Banner*. Her decision was blasted on social media by supporters of the “take a knee” stance championed by National Football League (NFL) players who kneel

during the anthem to protest racial injustice.

US President Donald Trump and other conservatives have called the players unpatriotic.

Knight, known as “the empress of soul” for a career that stretches back five decades, said she wanted to “give the anthem back its voice” to include Americans struggling for racial justice. She said she did not need to prove her commitment to civil rights.

“I have fought long and hard for all my life, from walking back hallways, from marching with our so-

cial leaders, from using my voice for good,” the *Midnight Train To Georgia* singer said in a statement.

“I have been in the forefront of this battle longer than most of those voicing their opinions to win the right to sing our country’s anthem on a stage as large as the Super Bowl,” Knight added.

Rihanna and Pink are among musicians who are reported to have declined to perform at the Super Bowl half-time show on Feb 3 in support of Kaepernick, who has sued the NFL, accusing owners of colluding to blackball him. REUTERS

Green Book boosts Oscar odds with big win at PGA Awards

LOS ANGELES • In a surprise win last Saturday, Hollywood producers named *Green Book* the best film of 2018, boosting its profile just days before nominations are announced for the annual Academy Awards.

The big win by *Green Book* at the 30th Producers Guild of America (PGA) Awards sets up the film, which stars Mahershala Ali as an African-American pianist and Viggo Mortensen (both right) as his white driver in the early 1960s *Deep South*, as a major contender for next month’s Oscars.

In many past years, PGA best film winners have gone on to win the best picture Oscar, Hollywood’s top prize.

The PGA’s best film had been predicted to be a contest between *A Star Is Born* and *Roma*. Earlier this month, *Green Book* won the Golden Globe as best musical or comedy.

The Producers Guild of America, among the leading industry organisations representing makers of movies and TV shows, also named its best animated film which went to *Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse*, favourite documentary, won by *Won’t You Be My Neighbor?*, and honoured FX’s *The Americans* as the top television drama in its final season.

FX scored again when Ryan Murphy’s *The Assassination Of Gianni Versace: American Crime Story* won the award for limited series.

Among other honours for television productions, Amazon Video’s *The Marvelous Mrs Maisel* won the comedy series award and HBO’s *Fahrenheit 451* prevailed as best television movie.

CNN’s Anthony Bourdain: *Parts Unknown*, starring the late celebrity chef who committed suicide last year, won for non-fiction television, while RuPaul’s *Drag Race* on VH1 took home the prize for reality competition series.

PBS’ *Sesame Street*, which debuted nearly 50 years ago, won for children’s programme. The live entertainment/talk award went to *Last Week Tonight With John Oliver*, while *Being Serena* took best sports programme.

The Academy Awards will be given out on Feb 24 to producers, directors, actors and actresses by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. REUTERS



B| HOME



JIAN YANG
HIS COLLECTION OF ABOUT
10,000 BARBIE DOLLS IS AMONG
THE WORLD'S LARGEST

Ms Wang Shijia, owner of local creative studio Ang Ku Kueh Girl and Friends, at her Raffles Place office, which she has organised using Kondo's method.
ST PHOTO: KHALID BABA



Marie Kondo show sparks decluttering fever here



Housewife Casey Lee, who tidied up her wardrobe and drawers using Marie Kondo's method after watching the first two episodes of the organising consultant's Netflix series, folds her clothes using Kondo's vertical folding technique, and arranges them such that each item is visible once the wardrobe is opened.
ST PHOTO: NG SOR LUAN

S'poreans share their efforts at following organisational guru's method on social media

Benson Ang
Lifestyle Correspondent

Mop the floor, wash the curtains, wipe down the furniture – that was what Ms Casey Lee, 45, always did when she cleaned her house for Chinese New Year.

But this year, the housewife also

cleared out one-third of her wardrobe, getting rid of 20kg of dresses, pants and work wear.

Her inspiration? Marie Kondo, the Japanese organising consultant famous for her method of keeping only things that “spark joy”.

The organisational guru's Netflix series Tidying Up With Marie Kondo was released on Jan 1,

prompting many Singaporeans to declutter their bedrooms and write about it on social media.

In consumerist Singapore, where shopping is a national pastime, the show's mantra appears to have resonated with people.

On local social media, the hashtags #mariekondo and #sparkjoy are trending, with artists like Irene Ang sharing their efforts. Even the Singapore Civil Defence Force jumped on the bandwagon, writing: “Perhaps Marie Kondo got some tips from us. Nothing will #sparkjoy

PHOTO MEMORIES

I already have the photographs to keep those memories alive. I don't need the physical clothes.



HOUSEWIFE CASEY LEE, 45, about throwing out special clothes worn for birthdays and anniversaries.

more in our responders than having neatly organised equipment in our vehicles to be quickly deployed for emergencies.”

After watching the series' first two episodes about two weeks ago, Ms Lee, a mother of two, soon emptied her wardrobe and placed all her clothes on the bed. She says: “I took a hard look at each item and asked, ‘Does this item spark joy?’ Whatever did not, I got rid of.”

This included old blouses and dresses which no longer fit, were too worn, or whose designs she no

longer liked. Some were special, worn for birthdays and anniversaries, but she says: “I already have the photographs to keep those memories alive. I don't need the physical clothes.”

She thanked each item before discarding it, just as Kondo did on the show. “It sounds weird, but thanking the clothes gave me closure,” she says. She intends to sell the clothes, or donate them to a nearby church, which operates a thrift store.

[HIKE IN DONATIONS](#) continued on B2



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Party checklist: Food, drinks – and a security guard

More people are hiring security guards for weddings, funeral wakes and private parties

Joyce Lim
Senior Correspondent

When polytechnic student Ryan Koh and his friends hosted a Halloween party last October, they made sure they had all the usual items down pat – food, drinks and decor.

They also set aside part of their budget for one more thing – to hire a security officer to stand at the door.

As teens in costumes partied the night away at a double-storey chalet in Changi from 8pm to 4am, the burly man conducted random bag checks on the guests, numbering about 100.

“We were worried that things might get out of control as we were expecting a huge turnout and we would not know everyone who was coming to the party,” Mr Koh, 20, told The Straits Times.

“One of our concerns was people taking drugs. We felt that the presence of a security guard would help prevent that.”

The students paid Deep Security Services \$350 for the guard.

Said its managing director, Mr Tejdeep Singh: “The teens were also worried about guests bringing weapons to the party. We deployed a big-sized officer there to stop anyone from creating trouble.”

Professional security guards have long been a mainstay for mega public events such as the F1 races, as well as for engagements attended by high-powered VIPs such as politicians.

In recent years, Singaporeans are also turning to security services for low-key functions such as private parties, weddings and funeral wakes, paying between \$200 and \$500 an hour per security guard.

Reasons range from ensuring safety to keeping out gatecrashers



and even preventing outsiders from consuming the food.

For instance, a couple who held their wedding at Gardens by the Bay last month hired a security guard to stand at the entrance of the publicly-accessible ballroom to keep members of the public away.

“Just in case some people tried to come in for a free meal,” said Mr Singh.

There are no industry statistics available, but security firms said that they have observed an uptick

Reasons range from ensuring safety to keeping out gatecrashers and even preventing outsiders from consuming the food.

in such requests in the past two years.

It is a nascent trend. Deep Security has covered six weddings since 2017. Shake Affinity, a mobile bar and beverage caterer which also provides security services, covered two weddings last year.

One reason is the now ubiquitous use of social media, the security firms said. Friends, they added, may share pre-wedding party photographs, which could then alert uninvited guests, such as the exes of the newly-weds.

A man who got married recently told The Straits Times that his ex-girlfriend threatened to disrupt his wedding reception after learning about it from a Facebook post. He considered hiring security services but, in the end, switched venues instead.

Mr Francis Chng of Horus I secu-

rity firm said he had been getting requests regularly to provide security services for funerals. So far, he has handled two such assignments.

Most of the time, the presence of security officers is a deterrent for any potential troublemakers.

Mr Chng recalled providing security services at a funeral where the family members of the deceased were worried about a relative coming to stir up trouble.

“For three days during the wake, we had three security officers guarding the venue,” he said.

“The relative showed up eventually, but he did not create any trouble. I’m not sure if it was because our guards were there. But we had advised our client to allow the relative to pay his last respects and watch from a distance.”

joycel@sph.com.sg

Mr Tejdeep Singh (centre), managing director of Deep Security Services, with Ms Manjit Kaur (director) and Mr Tarandeep Singh (operations). The firm has covered six weddings since 2017.
ST PHOTO: KELVIN CHNG



Some are concerned that the wildlife in the area would be affected. The NEA is investigating the matter.
PHOTO: COURTESY OF TED NG

Black discharge spotted in Potong Pasir canal

Tee Zhuo

The authorities are investigating a black discharge seen in a canal in Potong Pasir.

Videos uploaded on the Nature Society (Singapore) Facebook page last Saturday morning, and shared with The Straits Times, show an inky black substance flowing into the canal, which then spreads and clouds the water rapidly.

In response to ST’s queries, the Public Utilities Board (PUB) said it received a report of discharge in an outlet drain at Potong Pasir Avenue 1at 10.20am on Saturday.

“PUB officers and contractors went down to investigate immediately,” the national water agency said yesterday, adding that investigation was in progress.

There was no discharge found at the site when the officers arrived as it might have been diluted with water in the canal, PUB said.

“Online water quality sensors and in-situ water quality readings showed that water quality is within the normal range. We will continue to closely monitor water quality over the next few days,” a PUB spokesman said.

The National Environment Agency (NEA) said it was aware of the matter and is investigating.

In the videos, a construction site and a Lian Beng Group crane can be seen adjacent to the canal. ST understands that a condominium is being built at the site, and that the canal leads to the Kallang River.

Mr Ted Ng, 34, who frequents the area to photograph wildlife, said he spotted the black liquid flowing into the canal twice, first at around 9.30am, and the second time between 10.30am and 11am.

Several residents nearby had also whipped out their phones to take pictures and videos, added Mr Ng, an administrator who works in the finance industry.

He said he was concerned that birds, fish and otters in the area would be affected. His friend later alerted the authorities, he said.

Veteran wildlife expert Subaraj Rajathurai said the presence of a black discharge could mean oil or inner soil from the site.

ST has also contacted Lian Beng Group for more information.

teezhuo@sph.com.sg

Thrift stores see increase in donated items

FROM B1

The Straits Times checked with thrift stores to see if they had been the beneficiaries of Kondo fever.

Ms Preeya Bajaj, a programme executive at the Singapore Council of Women’s Organisations, confirms its New2U Thrift Shop is “up to the brim” with donations and has to stop accepting donations for now.

While she says Kondo’s popularity might have contributed to a recent surge in giving, this could also have been due to the shop being closed for about three weeks for the year-end holidays.

Mr Nicholas Tan, donor and customer care manager at The Salvation Army Red Shield Industries, also says it is experiencing a hike in donations in kind compared with non-festive months, but it is difficult to “ascertain if this increase is due to the recent (Kondo) phenomenon”.

As for the clothes Ms Lee kept, she folded each item using Kondo’s vertical folding technique, and arranged

them such that each item is visible once the wardrobe is opened. She says: “Some of my clothes – previously buried at the back of my wardrobe – have never been worn. I consider them my ‘new’ clothes this Chinese New Year, and I won’t buy any more this festive season.”

While the Netflix series revived interest in Kondo, fans of her 2011 book, *The Life-changing Magic Of Tidying Up*, have been following her principles for years.

Ms Wang Shijia, owner of local creative studio Ang Ku Kueh Girl and Friends, has tidied her home using Kondo’s method since 2016.

Last month, the Singaporean, 42, started applying the same principles to her Raffles Place office, and got rid of old product samples, props and drafts of past work.

She says: “In the past, I could not bear to throw these things away because I always felt I would one day need to refer to them... But now, I realise it is important to also clear an open space at the workplace so I

don’t feel tied to products or merchandise I created in the past.”

One item she kept, however, is a money plant, a farewell gift from a former employee. “It reminds me of this sweet girl and our happy memories working together,” says Ms Wang. “That’s why it sparks joy.”

Ms Regina Yeo, adjunct senior lecturer of marketing at the National University of Singapore Business School, feels one reason why Kondo’s method resonates strongly with Singaporeans is its focus on one’s “joy”. “Kondo’s key message of decluttering is to keep the things that ‘spark joy’ – and who doesn’t want some joy in their lives?”

In a world that sometimes promotes unrestrained consumerism and buying, she adds, Kondo’s decluttering method is refreshing because it allows people to be more aware of what they own, and how items should have a purposeful, or functional, benefit to their lives.

Associate professor of marketing Hannah Chang, 37, of Singapore Management University’s Lee Kong Chian School of Business, feels it is too early to say if Kondo’s decluttering method is a fad or is here to stay. Part of the current excitement generated by the show also stems from its timeliness, she adds. “It is the start of a new year, and Chinese New Year is around the corner. This is usually the time when many Singaporeans do spring-cleaning.”

bang@sph.com.sg



The black car (above) collided with a Mercedes-Benz in Jalan Bukit Merah on Saturday afternoon. The Mercedes driver was allowed to leave but the driver of the other car and his male passenger were arrested. PHOTOS: SHIN MIN DAILY NEWS



2 drug suspects held after car collision

10

At least this number of packets of cigarettes, and a bottle of what looked like cough syrup, were found.

Timothy Goh

Two men were arrested for suspected drug-related offences after the car they were in collided with another vehicle on Saturday.

No injuries were reported in the accident, which occurred in Jalan Bukit Merah towards Queensway at 2.26pm.

However, the 35-year-old driver and 28-year-old passenger in one of the cars were arrested on suspected drug-related offences.

Eyewitnesses told Chinese newspaper Shin Min Daily News that the collision took place between a black sedan car and a Mercedes-Benz.

A 26-year-old saleswoman, who

gave her name only as Ms Long, told Shin Min that parties from both cars waited for the police to arrive.

She said that after speaking with them, the police allowed the driver of the Mercedes to leave.

After that, according to another eyewitness who gave his name only as Mr Su, officers brought several police dogs to the scene.

He said several items that looked like packets of cigarettes were found in the car. The men were then arrested.

Shin Min reported that at least 10 packets of cigarettes and a bottle of what appeared to be cough syrup were found.

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Programme aims to develop all-rounders

The International Baccalaureate (IB) is a globally recognised programme that aims to develop students as more all-rounded learners.

Founded in 1968 and based in Geneva, Switzerland, the IB Organisation offers IB programmes across more than 4,900 schools in 153 countries. The number of IB programmes conducted worldwide has grown by 39 per cent between 2012 and 2017.

A few local schools here have adopted the IB Diploma Programme for students aged 16 to 19, which leads to a qualification recognised by universities worldwide. International schools like Tanglin Trust School and Stamford American International School also offer the IB.

Mr Tang Woh Un, dean of IB at St Joseph's Institution, said the curriculum focuses on developing critical thinking skills through investigation and research work.

About 20 per cent to 40 per cent of a student's overall IB diploma score is based on continuous assessment over two years. This could be lab work, projects or oral recordings. The final exam makes up the rest of the score.

IB diploma students take six subjects and Theory of Knowledge, a course that combines philosophy, religion and logical reasoning.

The six subjects cut across areas like languages, humanities, sciences, mathematics and aesthetics, which refers to visual arts or music.

Students write a 4,000-word essay based on an independent research theme and complete another project that involves creativity, a sport or community service.

Mr Tang said: "In IB, the assessment closely supports how we want students to think and learn."

Anglo-Chinese School (Independent) teacher Terence Chiew said the programme is meant to develop students to reflect and think deeply, which will put them in good stead for further studies and life.

"Students who really enjoyed the IB were those willing to work hard and learn skills like project and time management and, along the way, develop passions and aspirations."

Amelia Teng

Why Singapore students consistently ace IB exam

High standards of education, students with better grades take the test among reasons



Mr Tan Aik Wen, one of Anglo-Chinese School (Independent)'s 27 perfect scorers in 2017: "To do well in such a system, I tried to pace myself. This meant not studying excessively hard and burning out early, which many IB students are prone to do, given the constant stresses of the programme."

Amelia Teng
Education Correspondent
and Jolene Ang

If the A-level exam is a sprint, the International Baccalaureate (IB) programme is a marathon.

That is how Mr Tan Aik Wen, one of Anglo-Chinese School (Independent)'s 27 perfect scorers in 2017, described his time in the school's IB programme.

Unlike the A levels, where grades are mostly determined by a final exam at the end of two years, IB students have many graded assignments throughout the two years.

Mr Tan, who is serving national service, told The Straits Times: "To do well in such a system, I tried to pace myself. This meant not studying excessively hard and burning out early, which many IB students are prone to do, given the constant stresses of the programme."

The 19-year-old, who has applied to read history at Oxford University, is among the many IB students here who have topped the exam since Singapore started taking part in the two-year pre-university diploma programme in 2005.

His alma mater was the first local school to offer the IB Diploma Programme (IBDP) that year.

The School of the Arts, which began in 2008, also took on the IBDP, and St Joseph's Institution (SJI) came on board in 2013. The Singapore Sports School started offering the programme in 2014.

Since then, Singapore has consistently outperformed its global counterparts, often producing more than half of the top scorers worldwide at the November sitting of the exam.

In the latest batch's results released earlier this month, Singapore had 38 students who got the perfect score of 45 points, out of 68 worldwide.

The average score in Singapore was also higher than the global average: 38.49 points against 28.58 points. And almost all the 2,152 students here – or 97.99 per cent – who took the exam last November passed, compared with the global rate of 68.73 per cent.

Globally, 18,387 students took the exam last November.

At ACS(I) alone, 357 of its 444 students obtained 40 points and above, with 268 scoring 42 to 45.

The other schools in Singapore that took the IB November exam were SJI, the School of the Arts, ACS International, Hwa Chong International School, SJI International, Australian International School and Madrasah Aljunied Al-Islamiah.

Another 17 schools, mostly international schools, took the IB exam separately in May. There are two sessions of the test each year – in May and November.

Their average score was 34.69, against the global average of 29.76. The May session produced 15 perfect scorers out of 259 globally.

Mr Tang Woh Un, dean of IB at SJI, said Singapore has high standards of education, whether it is IB or the A levels.

"There's a high concentration of 45-pointers (for the IB) in Singapore, and 40 and above gets students to many good universities, like the Ivy League universities in the United States," he said.

Associate Professor Jason Tan of the National Institute of Education said a reason for Singapore's stellar performance in the IBDP is that the schools which offer it take in students with better grades to begin with.

He added: "In the local schools, the IB track is positioned as a more selective track, whereas it's a mainstream exam in other countries."

"In these schools, along with the three local international schools, the socio-economic status of students tends to be higher, so there's also the effect of more home support and tuition."

In recent years, centres specialising in IB tuition have emerged, even though educators say the IB curriculum does not allow for drilling and rote learning, unlike the traditional A levels.

Mr Terence Chiew, 42, who has taught at ACS(I) for 13 years, pointed out: "IB requires consistent work instead of cramming at the end. There's no one-size-fits-all assessment for all subjects, and students are encouraged to explore what they love and are interested in. "There shouldn't be a need to go for tuition. The role of the school is to make the programme meaningful so students don't need tuition."

Students have said that having the assessment spread out across two years helps to reduce the pressure of the final exam and they can better manage their workload.

Former SJI student Kevan Toh, 18, who collected his results this year, said there was a lot of independent learning and projects.

"But it's not so academically intense because you can do all these in your own time. For example, we were given a year or 1½ years to do an extended essay, so it's not like you have to sit down and write it in six hours. You can take your time and do your research."

Former ACS(I) student Esther Koh, 25, said that having an IB qualification "seems to make entry into overseas universities easier".

Mr Koh Tiang Peng, who was among the first batch of ACS(I) IB students, said: "There was a lot of excitement when we first started. We had not heard about the IB before and I remember having to explain to my family and relatives what it was about."

Life has come full circle for the 30-year-old, who is now back at ACS(I) teaching his juniors history. "The IB helped me with time man-

agement and juggling different commitments. It also taught me to research and read widely, and learn to persuade and argue deeply," he said.

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Anglo-Chinese School (Independent) teachers Koh Tiang Peng (left) and Terence Chiew. Mr Koh was among the first batch of ACS (I) IB students, while Mr Chiew has taught at the school for 13 years.
ST PHOTO: MARK CHEONG

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38

Number of students in Singapore who attained the perfect score of 45 points, out of 68 worldwide, in the latest batch's results released earlier this month.

38.49

The average score in Singapore, compared with the global average of 28.58 points.

97.99%

The percentage of Singapore's 2,152 IB students who passed the exam last November, compared with the global rate of 68.73 per cent. Globally, 18,387 students took the exam last November.

SELECTIVE TRACK

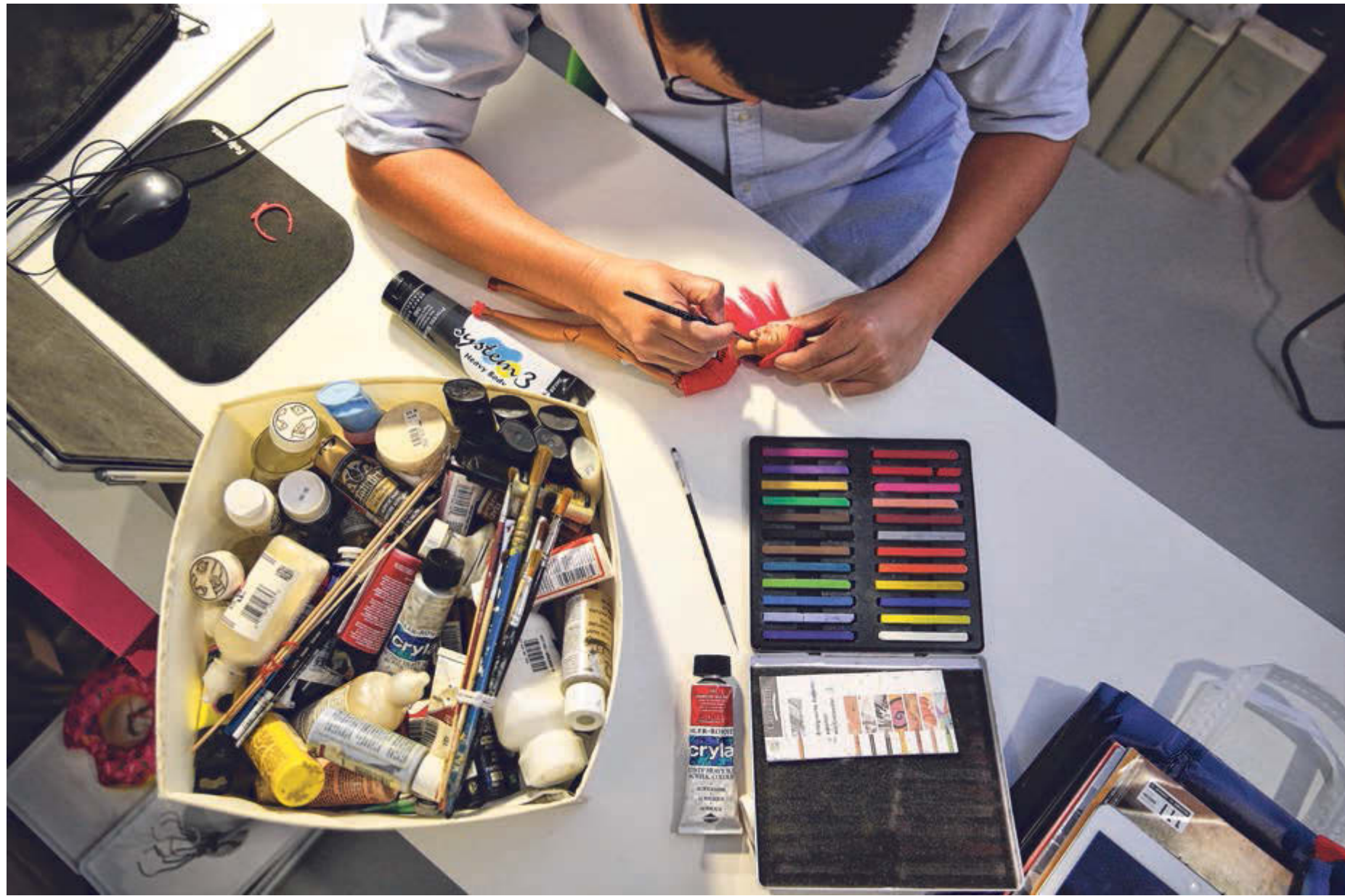
In the local schools, the IB track is positioned as a more selective track, whereas it's a mainstream exam in other countries.



ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR JASON TAN, of the National Institute of Education, on one reason for Singapore's stellar performance.

HOME IN FOCUS

Mr Yang customises the faces of some dolls by removing the features and painting on eyes, eyebrows and make-up.



The most expensive Barbie in Mr Yang's collection is a Silkstone doll decked in Swarovski crystals. He paid \$3,600 for it at a charity auction in 2000.



Mr Yang getting dressed in his walk-in wardrobe, where he displays his first Barbie and Ken dolls (top right in photograph) which he had since he was five.



Barbie dolls fill three rooms in Mr Jian Yang's 1,500 sq ft terraced house in the Bartley area. His interest started at the age of 13, when he watched Barbie advertisements on TV and he bought his first Barbie – a Scarlett O'Hara doll from the Gone With The Wind series – when he was 15. Even the floor of his bachelor pad is painted in Barbie's signature Pantone 219C pink to match the dolls. He also has 50 books on Barbie, including every issue of Barbie Bazaar, the official Barbie collectors' magazine.

THE MAN LIVING IN A BARBIE WORLD

Singaporean's collection of about 10,000 Barbie dolls is among the world's largest



Benson Ang
Lifestyle Correspondent



Kevin Lim
Executive Photojournalist

They look like beauty contestants putting on their best smile for the camera. Perfectly made up and impeccably groomed, they fight to be noticed as they stand in a line.

Except that these are not real-life models but rows and rows of Barbie dolls displayed on shelves. Hidden among them are those that resemble celebrities like Marilyn Monroe, Grace Kelly and Audrey Hepburn.

Welcome to the dollhouse of 39-year-old Singaporean Jian Yang, whose collection of about 10,000 Barbies is among the largest in the world.

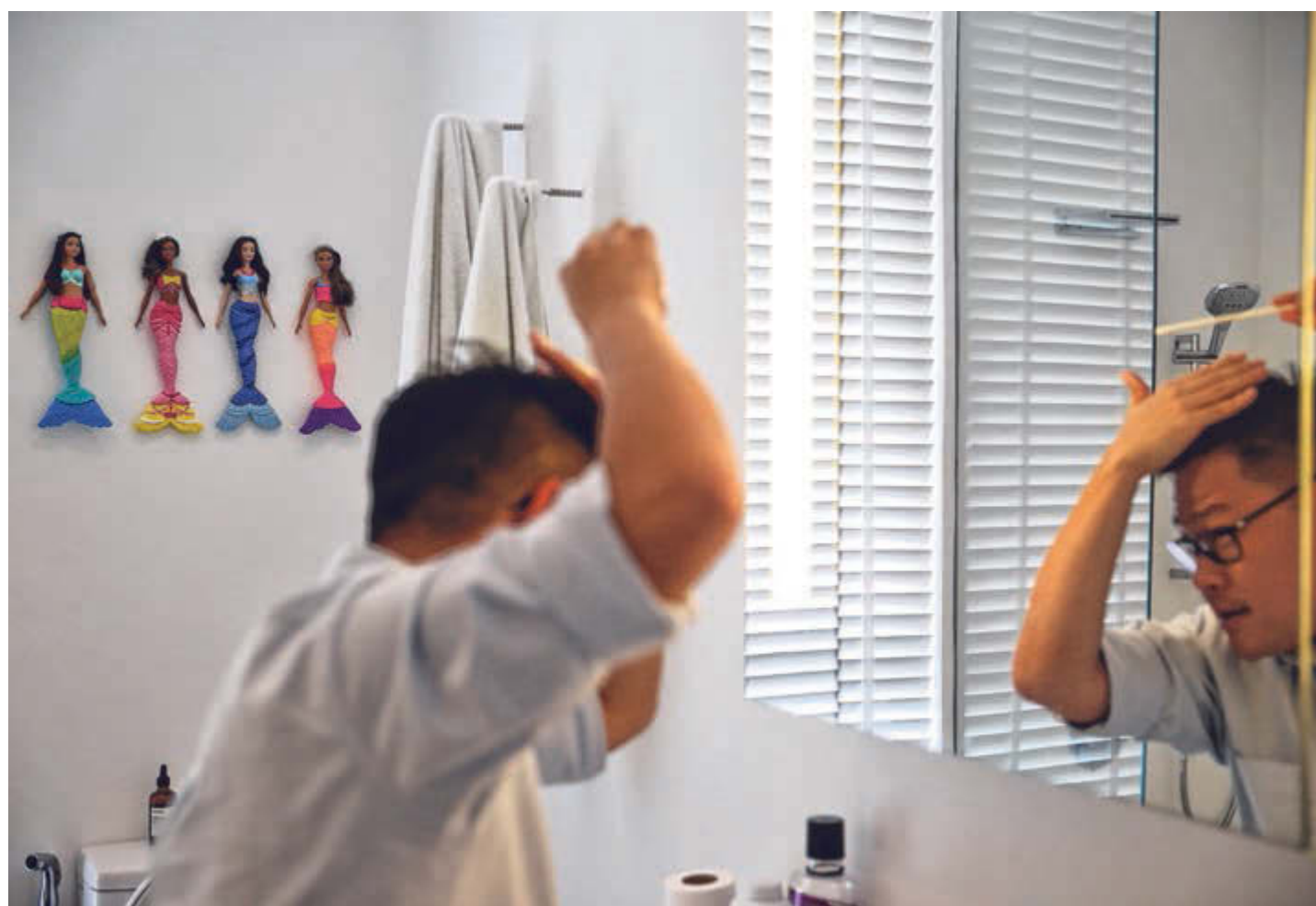
The dolls take up no fewer than three rooms inside his 1,500 sq ft terraced house in the Bartley area. And the floor of his bachelor pad is painted Barbie pink (Pantone 219C).

The world's most famous doll made her official debut on March 9, 1959, at the American International Toy Fair in New York, where she was launched by US toymaker Mattel.

As Barbie turns 60 this March, Mr Yang is looking to add commemorative editions to his collection, which includes dolls dressed like the Statue of Liberty and in ethnic costumes like the sarong kebaya.

Noting the doll's evolution over the years, Mr Yang said: "I love that Barbie dolls now come in different body shapes, skin colours, eye colours and hair colours to better reflect the diversity of the customers."

Mr Yang, a business director at international communications agency SPRG Singapore, posts pictures of his dolls on his Instagram account (@jianyang979), which has more than 20,000 followers. He also owns more "politically



correct" Barbie dolls, such as a casually dressed robotics engineer.

"I love the fact that they're giving Barbie real careers to futureproof the doll. Not all girls want to grow up to be princesses," he wrote on his Instagram account last year.

The devoted fan of Barbie first rose to prominence in 2013, when an article in The New Paper reported that he had 6,000 Barbie dolls. Coverage by other media outlets, such as the BBC, The Huffington Post, Daily Mail Online and various international news organisations, soon followed.

WON'T OUTGROW HOBBY

Some kids might outgrow their dolls, but I don't think I'll ever outgrow my Barbies. They are not just about fashion, but have taught me a lot about history and different cultures.



MR JIAN YANG, on his love for Barbie dolls and what he has learnt from them.

Mr Yang's interest in the dolls started at the age of 13, when he watched Barbie advertisements on TV and the first Barbie he bought, when he was 15, was a Scarlett O'Hara doll from the Gone With The Wind series.

But initially, the former Anglo-Chinese School (Independent) and Ngee Ann Polytechnic student had to face funny looks from people at the toy shop. As he grew older, he became more confident and felt that he did not need to explain his hobby to other people.

Mr Yang does not keep track of

Four Barbie mermaid dolls on the wall of Mr Yang's bathroom.



Mr Yang takes a selfie with a Ken doll customised to look like him.

how much he spends on the dolls, but says his most expensive doll cost him \$3,600 at a charity auction in 2000. He also buys books about Barbie – he has 50 of them, including every issue of Barbie Bazaar, the official Barbie collectors' magazine.

In his free time, he gives "makeovers" to some of his dolls. He would remove their painted features with nail polish remover and transform their looks by painting new eyes, eyebrows and make-up using acrylics.

He has also worked his magic on Ken dolls, Barbie's male counter-

part, giving them new looks and making them miniature versions of himself.

His latest challenge? Creating dresses for his dolls using unusual materials.

Mr Yang first tried this in 2017 while on a business trip to Sri Lanka, when he made a dress using toilet paper from the hotel room.

Photos of the ingenious, runway-worthy dress went viral on social media, and he has since fashioned garments from restaurant napkins and – for Christmas – gift wrapping paper.

Mr Yang, who also collects other toys, said: "There is a lot of stigma attached to why a boy would collect dolls, and it sometimes centres around speculations about childhood bullying and abuse. "I can tell you that I have never had any experience with those things, and I'm grateful that my friends and family remain loving, understanding and supportive. "I think the world changes faster than we give it credit for."

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Mr Yang with a 1994 Silver Screen Barbie doll, which he saw in San Francisco that year. He couldn't afford the US\$70 (\$95) doll then, but eventually bought one in 2015 from a private collector for \$30.

Crazy over Barbie

SCAN TO WATCH

ST

<http://str.sg/barbie>

EarthFest shows that it's easy being green



EarthFest Singapore, a sustainability festival to encourage visitors to adopt responsible living habits such as minimalism, plant-based diets and living a zero-waste lifestyle, was held at Marina Barrage yesterday.

A book swap and talks were among the activities organised at the event, now in its fourth edition. Environmentalist Karen Sim, 39, said: "It's nice to go to a festival where you can get to eat creative and tasty vegan food that is good for the environment. It is also good to learn about the new advocacy groups and sustainable businesses which have emerged in the market so I can support them. It is about developing a green lifestyle."

The event's official Facebook page noted that the number of stalls at the festival expanded to around 130 this year from 60 in 2015.

EarthFest Singapore, which was sponsored by Singapore Press Holdings this year, aims to "inspire and support people and organisations to make more environmentally sustainable choices through advocacy, education and engagement".

PHOTO: LIANHE ZAOBAO

Foster family lauded for dedication

Woman quit job in 2001 to care for three special needs kids, with help from husband, daughter

Melody Zaccheus

She quit her job to raise three children but they are not her own. Madam Hawa Bee Mohammed Hussain in 2001 became a foster mother to two special needs boys – one nine months old and the other, just 10 days old.

At the time, she was 43 and her husband, retired security officer Abdul Rahim Moidin, was 51. She had earlier signed on to join the foster parent scheme.

When the children were older, Mr Abdul Rahim would take them to school, and to the playground.

The couple's own daughter, Ms Wahedah Rahim, then 18, even signed up for classes on how to manage the older boy's fits.

Two years later, after getting the hang of caring for the boys, they took in another child – a baby girl who was just 16 days old, and who also has special needs.

For their dedication to the three

foster children, Madam Hawa Bee, 61, and her family were given the Kampung Spirit award by Persatuan Pemudi Islam Singapura (PPIS) Oasis yesterday.

As one of four government-appointed fostering agencies, PPIS Oasis provides support to Madam Hawa Bee's family, and a social worker visits them once every two months.

The awards ceremony took place during PPIS Oasis' official launch in Queenstown, and about 40 families attended the event.

Senior Parliamentary Secretary for Education and Social and Family Development Muhammad Faishal Ibrahim, speaking at the event, said it was heartening to see people coming forward to be foster parents.

He said: "Every child is important to Singapore. Singapore has no natural resources – only you and me, and our children. If we are able to give every child a good start, it means a lot for the country, and it means a great deal to the child."

PPIS Oasis also gave out awards to 20 foster children for good conduct, excellence in the performing arts, and for doing well in their studies.



(From left) Ms Wahedah Rahim, her father, Mr Abdul Rahim Moidin, and mother, Madam Hawa Bee Mohammed Hussain, received the Kampung Spirit award from Persatuan Pemudi Islam Singapura Oasis for their dedication to three foster children. Madam Hawa Bee says she opened her heart and home to the children as a way of giving back to society. ST PHOTO: MELODY ZACCHEUS

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- Snoring can be a symptom of Obstructive Sleep Apnea (OSA).
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EVERY CHILD MATTERS

Every child is important to Singapore. Singapore has no natural resources – only you and me, and our children. If we are able to give every child a good start, it means a lot for the country, and it means a great deal to the child.

DR MUHAMMAD FAISHAL IBRAHIM, Senior Parliamentary Secretary for Education and Social and Family Development.

Police hunt for wanted NSF who fled checks at Woodlands

Timothy Goh

The authorities are searching for a full-time national serviceman (NSF) who fled from police yesterday morning while bleeding from his left thigh.

The police told The Straits Times that at around 6.10am, their officers conducted checks on two men at Block 365 Woodlands Avenue 1. During the checks, one of the

men, a 22-year-old who had fresh lacerations on his left thigh, suddenly bolted and fled from the area.

Preliminary investigations revealed that he is an NSF who is wanted by the Singapore Armed Forces (SAF) for being absent without official leave.

At 3.35pm, a lookout message was sent to various taxi drivers telling them to keep an eye out for the suspect, who was described as

tall, slim and wearing a black shirt with shorts and slippers. He was also bleeding from his left thigh.

Anyone who spotted him was instructed to call the police at 999.

ST understands that as of 11.30pm yesterday, the man was still at large and no arrests had been made.

Police are investigating the matter.

timogh@sph.com.sg

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Invigorate your home with these new pieces. PHOTOS: CHATEAU D'AX, COURTS

Spruce up your home

Reimagine your living space with these choice picks

BY RACHEL TAN

This is the time for spring cleaning. Why not take the opportunity to breathe new life into your home with some new furniture?

Customisable comfort

Chateau d'Ax, a leading Italian maker of upholstery furniture, creates beautifully crafted pieces of the highest quality that offer unique style and unrivalled comfort.

Newly launched in Singapore, the third-generation family-run business offers luxe sofas. Outfitted in plush fabrics and made using the latest technology, they provide endless customisation options. The models available at its Palais Renaissance (#01-01) showroom include the ever-popular Bellagio — a quaint-looking sofa seat with the vintage charm of the 1950s, and adjustable head and leg rests for maximum comfort.

The comfortable and customisable Silhouette Recliner sofa is another good choice. It comes with a variety of striking combinations of inside and outside corner units, a chaise lounge unit and two differently shaped ottomans.

The upholstery can be customised according to your preferences, and Chateau d'Ax's sofas will have a place in any home.

The showroom is open from 10am to 8pm daily. To view its full range of products visit admoreliving.com

Revamp your home

Looking to jazz up your living and dining spaces without breaking the bank? Courts Singapore's 2019 capsule collections offer both style and substance. There are special discounts to be enjoyed.

For instance, purchase the Emilio five-piece dining set (\$999) and get its matching coffee table, television console and console table at 20 per cent off.

The Emilio, Dempster and Kameron collections, each featuring living and dining pieces in a distinct style, are perfect for those who want a seamless look for their living and dining areas.

Its customisable marble dining tables are also available in five colour finishes, three bases and three sizes. With such a wide selection, Courts offers something for every home with its 2019 collections.

Visit courts.com.sg/catalogue for more details.



Handy companion

ReSound LiNX Quattro is the only hearing aid that can work for 24 hours even when streaming 50 per cent of the time. It allows 30 hours of use on a fully charged battery without streaming. It also comes with a small, sleek charger case that can fit in your pocket or handbag. Check the status of the battery charge using the ReSound Smart 3D app.

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Auspicious goodies

Check out delightful treats from Hai Tien Lo and Pacific Marketplace this Chinese New Year. Highlights include the beautiful Lapis Surabaya and the celebratory artisanal meats of Homemade Pork Char Siew Sausage and Homemade Pork Terrine handcrafted in-house by master butcher Kurt Roelli. Don't miss the best-selling Rainbow Kueh Lapis too.

Visit the goodies counter outside Hai Tien Lo, pacificmarketplace.sg or call 6826-8240 to order.

TOP PICKS

Hot travel deals

Cycle & Carriage kicks off 2019 with a new brand promise, 'Exceptional Journeys'. Along with launching its new brand promise, Cycle & Carriage is also running a regional promotion to mark its 120th anniversary this year. From now to Nov 30, it is giving away to valued customers in Singapore, Malaysia and Myanmar 120 specially curated trips to three destinations: Mongolia, Nepal and Korea. Visit cyclearr.com for more details.



Better way to cook

Prepare healthier meals when you purchase La Gourmet's 8-in-1 Multi-functional 6L cooker pot for only \$259 (U.P. \$499). It comes with eight pre-set programmes and six safety features, and a one-year warranty. Receive a free La Gourmet 2.5L Thermal Wonder Cooker (worth \$69) with every purchase.



Top aural experience

One Futureworld (a Thakral Group company) has launched its first Bose Single Branded Store, Bose @ Paragon. Set in a modern and immersive environment, it allows shoppers to discover and experience Bose's complete range of innovative audio solutions. The 1,400 sq ft store includes a "Demo Room", where customers can enjoy the full "Bose Experience".

Smile to this

From now to Jan 26, join T32 Dental Centre's Invisalign Week at Financial District (CapitaGreen #02-01) to learn about clear aligners. Enjoy a detailed consultation with an experienced dentist, a smile assessment with a before-and-after simulation by iTero Scanner, and bring home a goodie bag. Limited slots available. Call 6385-1788, WhatsApp 9720-6578 or e-mail Invisalign.fd@t32dental.com to sign up.



Abalone feasts

Don't miss the succulent abalone creations served up by Resorts World Sentosa's celebrity chef restaurants this Chinese New Year. These include the delicately charred flavours of the Grilled Live Abalone and Sea Urchin with Truffle Salt (\$88++ per portion) at TEPPAN by Chef Yonemura; and Australian Fresh Abalone accompanied with Golden Oyster Dumpling (\$118++ per portion) at Feng Shui Inn. Visit rwsentosa.com/cny-dining for more information.



COMING UP



My favourite things in Salzburg
The Straits Times,
Bon Voyage, Jan 22



The joy of learning
The Straits Times,
Successful ageing, Jan 27



Trot in the Year of the Pig
<https://tinyurl.com/y9d6dvxp>



5 cost-saving hacks for new homeowners
<https://tinyurl.com/ybqozuso>

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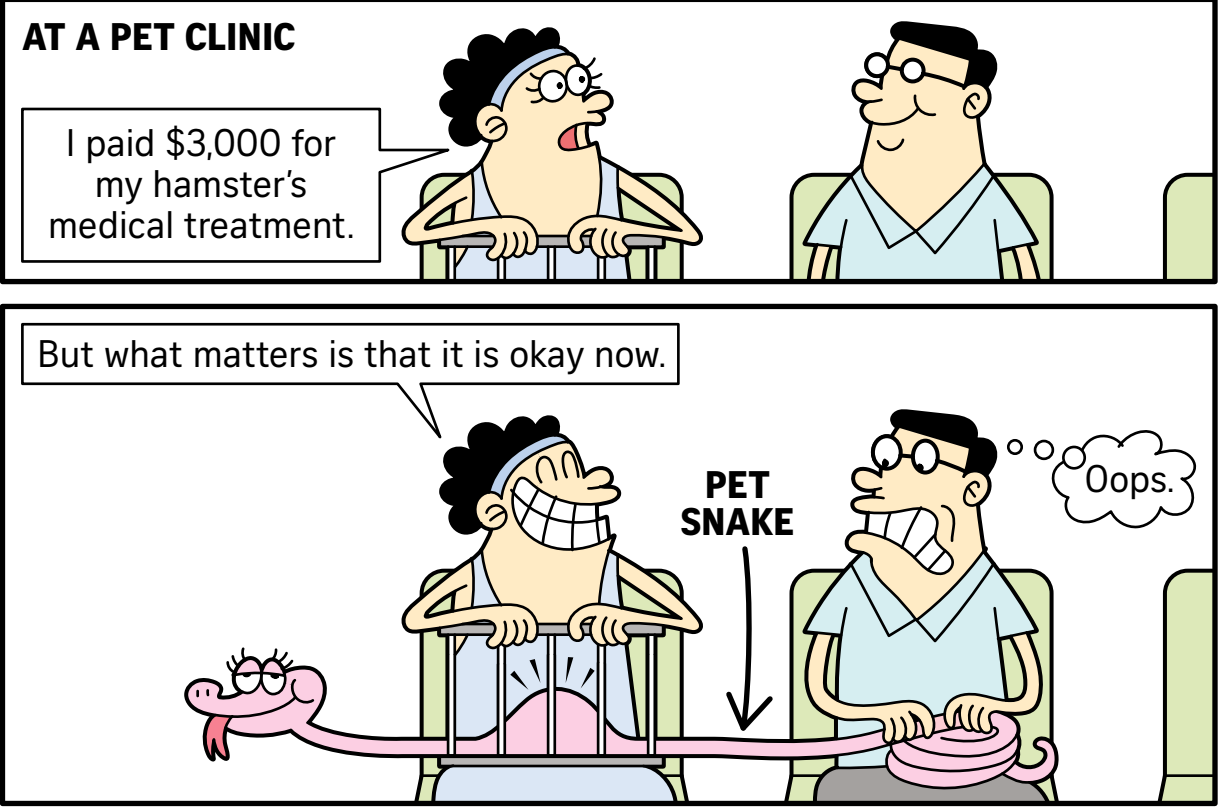
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FORUM

deedhan's TAKE

High veterinary costs



Do more to prevent anti-competitive acts

I was surprised to read that the Competition and Consumer Commission of Singapore (CCCS) is seeking public feedback on proposals by two lift companies (Supply of lift parts: Feedback sought on two firms' proposals; Jan 12).

When town councils first took over the maintenance of lifts in Housing Board estates almost 30 years ago, they faced the problem of lift companies not selling crucial spare parts to third-party maintenance contractors.

Over the years, CCCS has investigated a number of lift companies for the same issue (Five suppliers of spare parts for HDB lifts under probe; July 15, 2016).

Apparently, after so many years, the problem has not been resolved. I hope that after this phase, this issue can come to a close.

Lift companies are not the only ones controlling the sale of spare parts.

This can be seen in the motor industry too.

Last year, when I needed spare parts for my car, my mechanic said he was unable to obtain the parts from the local distributor unless I personally went down to produce proof of the purchase of my car.

More ought to be done to prevent such anti-competitive acts, including imposing strong punitive measures on errant companies.

Ronnie Lim Ah Bee

People need to know perils of victim-blaming

I was deeply saddened when I read the report on the outrage of modesty (SMU student arrested for aggravated outrage of modesty of woman he met on social media; Jan 10).

It was troubling that something so traumatic could happen to an unsuspecting young student.

However, what concerned me more were reactions from the public. Public reaction has ranged from mistrust of the girl's story to discrediting her character.

This is very disturbing as it reflects a fundamental lack of awareness of what victim-blaming is, and why it is harmful to society.

Victim-blaming is a devaluing act where the victim is partially or wholly blamed for the crime that happened to them.

Besides inflicting further damage on the victim, it is also harmful because policies can be affected by it.

Attributing blame to victims allows us to disregard any underlying societal issues that may enable perpetrators to commit crimes.

Focusing treatment on solely the individual would tackle individual perpetrators but fails to account for why these perpetrators feel like they can commit such offences.

Regardless of the outcome of this case, the fact remains that attributing blame to the victim's actions sends a harmful message that society is not at fault.

We need to confront the fact that there could be underlying problems in society that lead people to believe there is nothing wrong with committing such crimes.

Why did the perpetrator feel like he could get away with such actions? Why did this idea occur to an ordinary student?

Policymakers should focus efforts on targeting the underlying cause of such behaviour: a lack of respect for other people's bodies.

There needs to be a concerted effort that starts by teaching both men and women to respect their bodies and other people's bodies.

Gillian Loy (Ms)

Probe big difference in valuation and buyout amount

I read with much consternation the report on a private investor acquiring Ascott Reit's Ascott Raffles Place Singapore (Private investor buys Ascott Raffles Place for \$353m; Jan 10).

The report also indicated that the sale price was 64.3 per cent above the property's latest valuation of \$215 million as of Dec 31 last year and, after accounting for transaction-related expenses, Ascott Reit is expected to realise an estimated net gain of \$134 million.

I presume that there were valuations conducted and certified by professional valuers as well as audits done by professional accounting firms which were signed off by the company's chief executive and directors, before these were presented and reported to unit holders and other interested parties to reflect a true and fair view of the state of the company.

Yet, it is baffling that in a matter of 10 days, there was a significant increase of 64.3 per cent from the valuation amount.

The investing public can rely on only published financial reports to make their investment decisions.

Besides entrusting the companies' managements and boards of directors to do a good job for them, investors have to also rely on various professional firms including, in this instance, the property valuation company as well as the accounting firm in charge of the audit.

The huge valuation discrepancy in this case is a serious red flag that something is amiss in the process.

As this is a matter relating to a company listed on the Singapore Exchange, I hope the relevant authorities will initiate an investigation into this matter.

Tan Chor Yong

NewsEd

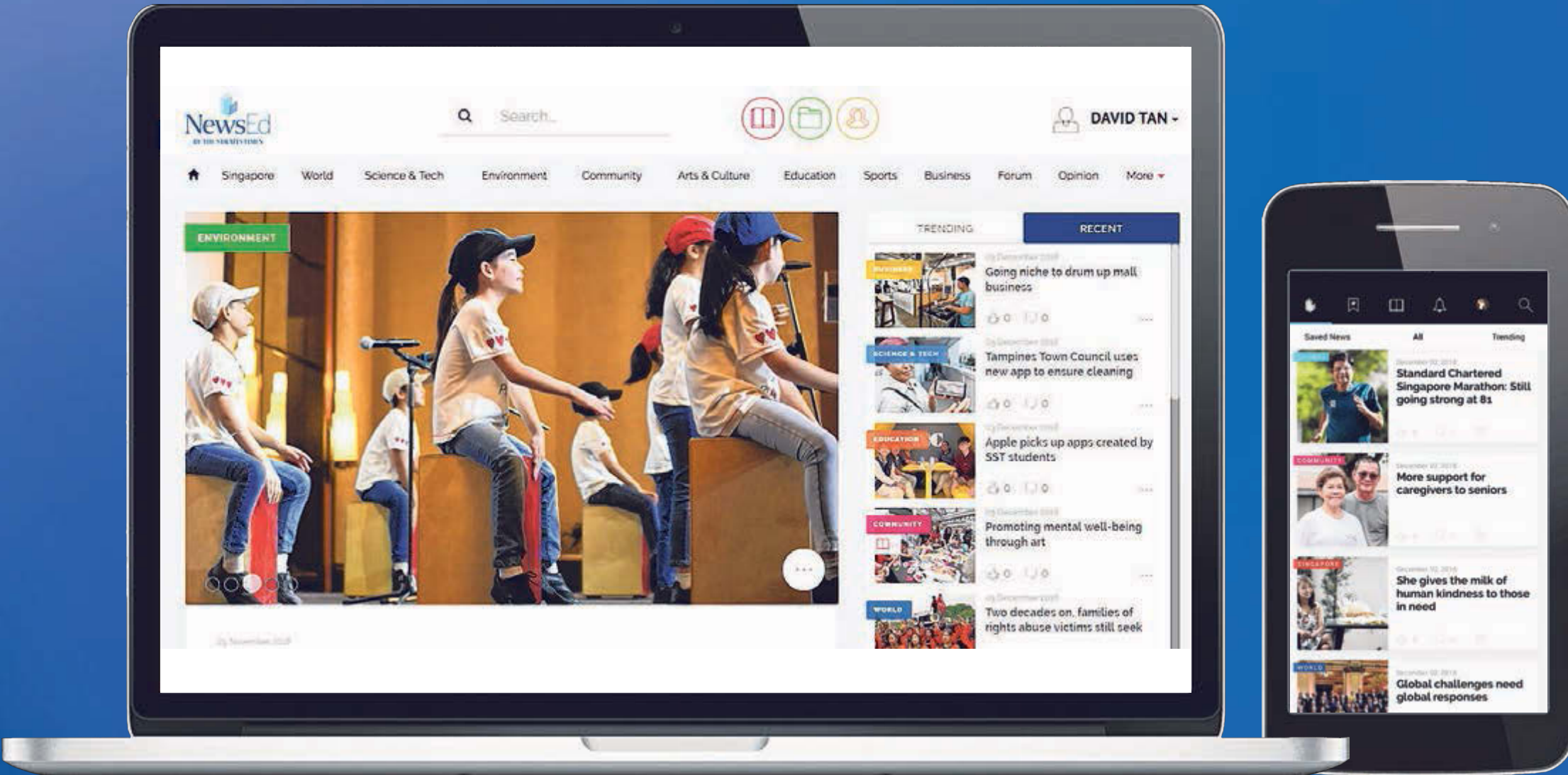
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Treating ‘pure’ drug users as patients is right step

The amendments to drug laws aim to draw a distinction between “pure drug abuse” and criminal offences (Law amended to focus more on rehabilitation of drug abusers; Jan 16).
This is a laudable move in a land that has never shied away from its punitive and deterrent approach for repeat drug offenders.
When the long-term imprisonment scheme came into effect in 1998, hardcore abusers – those caught for the third time or

more – were given sentences of at least five years’ jail and three strokes of the cane.
It was envisaged that such harsh laws would deter abusers.
However, our relapse rates have remained high, with the five-year recidivism rates for long-term imprisonment inmates at 60 per cent and almost 80 per cent of prisoners in Singapore serving time for drug-related offences.
It is evident that such punitive

laws did not achieve the intended results in deterring drug abuse.
Sadly, it has taken more than 20 years for our lawmakers to pin down this fact.
Drug addiction is a medical condition and should be treated as such.
Treating pure drug abusers as patients and not as criminals is the first distinction in getting it right this time.
Mohammed Saleem Mohammed Ibrahim

Incarceration will not help drug users kick the habit

The Government’s recently announced implementation of a new custodial regime for drug users that is based on rehabilitation and recovery from drug use is to be applauded (Law amended to focus more on rehabilitation of drug abusers; Jan 16).
There is now a wealth of published peer-reviewed scientific evidence, showing that, if psychoactive drugs are used repeatedly, users will become powerless to drugs and their lives will become increasingly destructive and unmanageable.
Once addiction sets in, users find out that their best efforts are likely to fail without professional help, no matter how desperate they are to

cease the habit.
Neurological changes in the brain and body, genetic vulnerability, isolation, the positive and negative reinforcements of the drugs, peer pressure and the availability of drugs, as well as depression, anxiety and other mental disorders consequent on drug use will simply make them helpless.
It is no surprise, therefore, that the suffering and stigma arising from incarceration acts as a weak deterrent for many who are addicted to drugs, and those with strong drug-taking risk factors who are contemplating it or experimenting with drugs.
Anecdotal accounts of some of

those who have been incarcerated suggest that far from being deterred and learning the error of their ways in prison, they learn the tricks of the trade from others and become tied to a drug-taking social network and culture on their release.
It is therefore important that they have somewhere to go after release with a drug-free culture, and have support from recovery groups like Narcotics Anonymous and peers.
There is also scientific evidence that individual, couples and family psychotherapy as well as a well-monitored recovery regimen supported by experienced recovery peers, have good long-term outcomes.
With our youth more vulnerable than ever to drug-taking normalisation on the Internet, it is vital that as a society, we are guided by strong evidence-based science in tackling drug addiction.
Andrew John da Roza

VoicesOfYouth

Harsher penalties to curb animal abuse

Recently, the owner of Platinum Dogs Club was arrested after many complaints of mistreatment of pets were made against the facility (Missing dog died while boarded at Platinum: AVA; Jan 10).
Under the Animals and Birds Act, convicted offenders who fail in their duty of care towards animals while conducting an animal-related business can face a fine of up to \$40,000, a jail term of two years, or both. The severity of the punishment is not harsh enough to serve as a deterrent to most animal abusers.
Animals deserve to be treated with respect and should be given better protection rights.
I hope that the Government will place more importance on this

issue and do its best to reduce cases of animal cruelty.
Clarissa Ng Ming Yi, 16
Secondary 4 student

No-smoking zones may be provocative

While the no-smoking zone in Orchard Road is commendable, there are better ways to prevent youth from picking up smoking (Snuffing out an unhealthy habit in Singapore; Jan 6).
Implementing no-smoking zones could be problematic as enforcement actions could generate unhappiness and anger among smokers. This may even lead to physical assault or injuries.
My schoolmates and I, over the past three years, have advocated the Tobacco Free Generation

approach, which encourages youth to be part of the tobacco-free generation, to students in the Philippines.
I believe this approach is more effective in preventing youth from smoking than provoking them with limits and bans.
Poh Yong Hao, 17
Junior college year 1 student

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Govt agencies must manage art scene better

If Singapore wants to establish itself as an arts hub, it has to take care of its affairs (Art Stage fair cancelled days before opening; Jan 17).
Recently, the founder of Art Stage cancelled the contemporary art fair just nine days before its planned opening, citing a weak local market and “unequal competition” as reasons for doing so.

In cancelling the fair at the last minute, clearly, his main aim was to smear Singapore’s reputation as an Asian art hub.
I suspect that this is because Government agencies have not been managing the art scene well.
The Singapore art scene is currently mainly foreign-led.
The direction of our art scene should not depend on foreigners, as this incident shows us that the Republic’s reputation is not much of a concern to foreigners.
The bottom line is that government agencies should take better care of the art scene and the fairs here.
Hua Tye Swee

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- 2. DR WILLIAM WAN:** Take time to reach out to your neighbours.

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Too many variables to assign risk value to trees

I do not think it is justified to spend resources on risk assessing and labelling trees for instrumentation monitoring (SMRT group taking refuge from rain when tree fell on shelter, Dec 21; and Think out of the box to tackle tree-falling problem, Dec 27, 2018).
Planting the right trees in the right place, not transplanting trees which

are too big or planting trees too close together, coupled with relevant pruning measures should be budget-realistic and sufficient preventive measures.
Unlike buildings, plants and trees grow and adapt both above and below the soil.
In the urban setting, where trees and plants are installed by people, it

is difficult to assess risk factors and assign a risk value to trees.
While one tree may not grow well on slopes, another may adapt well with its root structures even if above the ground it may look lopsided and structurally dangerous. Also, even with more arborists, we cannot predict how much stress trees can take in extreme weather events.

While we can apply assessment standards and testing protocols to building structures which are man-made, there are still many unknown variables to decide whether a healthy-looking tree is going to fall, and when it might.
According to papers on the *Erythrophleum suaveolens* – the species of the tree that fell in Sembawang park – a coastal, wet area is not the native habitat of this species. Rather, it thrives in the dry

forest zones of West Africa, while its close cousin *Erythrophleum ivorense* is widely found in coastal wet evergreen forests. Perhaps, it was not suitable to have planted the tree too close to the coast.
The roots of an acidic-tolerant tropical forest tree species may not grow too well if the tree is planted in more alkaline soil, which may be the case of the soil next to the sea.
For long-term planning, the National Parks Board may want to

take into account climate change forces along the coasts and the extreme weather events that are expected from time to time, and carry out a survey of the tree species that were planted by humans more than 20 to 30 years ago in man-made parks along the coasts.
A shared database on uprooted trees will also be useful for all coastal cities, so as to better plan the planting of trees.
May Liu (Ms)

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ST PHOTO: ONG WEE JIN

Island living

An aerial view of luxury enclave Sentosa Cove, with Tanjong Beach on the left and Tanjong Golf Course behind. Sentosa Cove boasts quayside restaurants, shops and oceanfront residences.

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“The P-Max programme enables the Company to benefit from the PMET's wealth of experience and this has further strengthened the Company's move towards becoming a listed Company. The Company has seen positive changes and is more systematic in our execution of plans and operations towards an MNC environment.”

Mr Goh Hak Kheng
Executive Chairman

Employee's Story
“P-Max provides good workshops to calibrate expectations between the employer and employee. The programme allows me to learn and adapt to a new industry and facilitates my contribution to the Company. In addition, adapting to the culture of the company is a key motivation factor. It is a mutually beneficial situation that my prior experience could be used to further strengthen the Company's culture from an MNC's perspective.”

Mr Christopher Tay
Director

CCL

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Workforce Singapore

P-Max and PCP Bundling

Learn what the past participants have to say

Name of Company
Clearvisions Cleaning Solutions Pte Ltd

Employer's Story
“The bundling availability of the Broad-Based Professional Conversion Programme which provides both wage support to my Company and structured training for my newly-hired staff is a further benefit for us to employ mid-career swiches. The 3-months wage support makes it more affordable to employ matured PMETs and the training courses help to equip the PMET with new skills sets in his job functions.”

Mr Mark Loke
Operations Manager

Employee's Story
“The classroom training courses conducted by SMF Centre for Corporate Learning on developing an effective marketing plan and how to build customer loyalty were very useful in terms of knowledge and insights in my job role. In addition, the structured in-house training carried out by the Company was a good platform for me to further enhance my familiarisation of the Company's operations, staff and working environment.”

Mr Sudave s/o Ramachandran
Business Development Manager

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